

LETTERS
FROM
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

VOLUME II

SURI NAGAMMA

Translated by
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Published by
T. N. VENKATARAMAN
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SRI RAMANASRAMAM
TIRUVANNAMALAI
S. INDIA
1960

The Jupiter Press Private Ltd., Madras-18.



Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

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LETTERS FROM SRI RAMANASRAMAM

(Translated from Telugu)

VOLUME II

(1) THE ATTITUDE OF SILENCE

3rd September, 1947

I went to Bhagavan's sannidhi (Presence) at 3 o'clock this afternoon and joined the group of people around him in their discussions. Bhagavan casually remarked that Adi Sankara wrote Dakshinamurthy¹ Sthothram in three parts and said "Sri Sankara felt like singing in praise of Sri Dakshinamurthy but then, Dakshinamurthy being the embodiment of silence, the problem was how to describe silence. He therefore analysed the three attributes of silence, namely, Srishti (creation) Sthithi (preservation) and Laya (dissolution) and thus offered his salutations to Dakshinamurthy. Dakshinamurthy is the embodiment of these three attributes which do not have any discernible characteristics or distinguishing marks. How else can Silence be eulogised ? "

Taking up the thread of the conversation a devotee said : "Dandapani Swami told us several years back that on a Mahasivarathri² day, devotees gathered around

¹ Dakshinamurthy is Siva incarnate as a youth teaching in Silence. Bhagavan has been identified with Dakshinamurthy.

² Great Night of Siva (in February each year).

Bhagavan saying, 'Bhagavan must explain to us today the meaning of Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam' (Eight slokas in praise of Dakshinamurthy). Bhagavan however, sat in silence, smiling. After waiting for some time the devotees went away feeling that, by his continued silence, Bhagavan had taught them that silence alone was the true meaning of those slokas. Is that a fact ? "

Bhagavan (with a smile) : " Yes. That is true."

I (with some surprise) : " So that means Bhagavan gave a silent commentary ? "

Bhagavan : " Yes. It was a silent commentary".

Another devotee : " *Mowna* means abiding in the Self, isn't it ? "

Bhagavan : Yes. That is so. Without abiding in the Self, how could it be *mowna* (silence) ? "

Devotee : " That is just what I am asking. Would it be *mowna* if one were to completely refrain from speech without at the same time having an awareness of the Self and abiding therein ? "

Bhagavan : " How could real *mowna* be achieved ? Some people say that they are observing *mowna* by keeping their mouths shut but at the same time they go on writing something or other on bits of paper or on a slate. Is not that another form of activity of the mind ? "

Another devotee : " Is there then no benefit at all in refraining from speech ? "

Bhagavan : " A person may refrain from speech in order to avoid the obstacles of the outer world, but he

should not consider that to be an end in itself. True Silence is really endless speech ; there is no such thing as attaining it because it is always present. All you have to do is to remove the worldly cobwebs that enshroud it ; there is no question of attaining it".

While we were thus engaged in discussions, someone said that a broadcasting company was thinking of recording Bhagavan's voice. Bhagavan laughed and said, "Oho ! You don't say so ! But my voice is Silence, isn't it ? How can they record Silence ? That which Is, is Silence. Who could record it ? "

The devotees sat quiet, exchanging glances and there was absolute silence in the hall. Bhagavan, the embodiment of Dakshinamurthy, sat in the Attitude of Silence (mouna mudra) facing southwards.³ That living image, his body, was radiant with the Light of the Self. Today is indeed a memorable day.

(2) BEYOND THE THREE STATES

6th September, 1947

Last month, during my sister-in-law's stay here, the proofs of the Telugu version of the 'Vichāra Mani Mālā' (Self-enquiry) were received. In the afternoon Bhagavan corrected them and passed them on to me. On reading them, my sister-in-law asked me the meaning of *swapnātyanta nivritti*. I tried to explain,

³One meaning of the name Dakshinamurthy is 'The Southward facing'. The Guru (teacher) is the spiritual North Pole and, therefore, traditionally faces south.

but as I was not sure myself, I could not satisfy her fully. On noticing this, Bhagavan asked, "What is the matter? Is there a mistake?"

I replied, "No. She is asking the meaning of *swapnatyanta nivritti*."

Bhagavan said kindly, "It means absolute, dreamless sleep".

I asked, "Would it be true to say that a Jnāni has no dreams?"

Bhagavan : "He has no dream-state".

My sister-in-law was still not satisfied, but as people began to talk about other things, we had to leave the matter there. Only at night she said, "In the 'Vāsishtam'* it is stated that a Realized Soul appears to perform actions, but they do not affect him at all. We ought to have asked Bhagavan the real meaning of this".

On going to the Asramam next morning, it so happened that Bhagavan was just then explaining the very point to Sundaresa Iyer. Eagerly availing herself of the opportunity, my sister-in-law again asked. "Bhagavan has stated that *Swapnatyanta nivritti* means absolute, dreamless sleep. Does it mean that a jnāni does not have dreams at all?"

Bhagavan : "It is not only the dream-state, but all three states that are unreal to the Jnāni. The real state of the Jnāni is where none of these three states exists".

I asked, "Is not the waking-state also equivalent to a dream?"

* *Yoga Vasishtam* — a book on yoga by Vasishta Maharshi.

Bhagavan : " Yes, whereas a dream lasts for a short time, the waking-state lasts longer. That is the only difference."

I : " Then deep sleep is also a dream ? "

Bhagavan : " No, deep sleep is an actuality. How can it be a dream when there is no mental activity ? However, since it is a state of mental vacuity, it is nescience (*avidyā*) and must therefore be rejected ".

I persisted, " But is not deep sleep also said to be a dream-state ? "

Bhagavan : " Some may have said so for the sake of terminology, but really there is nothing separate. Short or long duration applies only to the dream and waking states. Someone may say : ' we have lived so long and these houses and belongings are so clearly evident to us that it surely can't be all a dream ? ' But we have to remember that even dreams seem long while they last. It is only when you wake up that you realize that they only lasted a short time. In the same way, when one attains Realization (*jñāna*), this life is seen to be momentary. Dreamless sleep means nescience ; therefore it is to be rejected in favour of the state of pure Awareness ".

My sister-in-law then interposed, " It is said that the bliss that occurs in deep sleep is experienced in the state of *samādhi*¹ as well, but how is that to be reconciled with the statement that deep sleep is a state of nescience ? "

¹ Samadhi means perfect absorption of thought in the one object of meditation i.e. the Supreme Spirit (the 8th and last stage of yoga).

Bhagavan : "That is why deep sleep has also to be rejected. It is true that there is bliss in deep sleep, but one is not aware of it. One only knows about it afterwards when one wakes up and says that one has slept well. Samādhi means experiencing this bliss while remaining awake."

I : "So it means waking, or conscious sleep ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes, that's it."

My sister-in-law then brought up the other cognate question that had worried her : "It is said by Vasishtha that a Realized Soul seems to others to be engaged in various activities, but he is not affected by them at all. Is it because of their different outlook that it seems so to others, or is he really unaffected ? "

Bhagavan : "He is really unaffected".

My sister-in-law : "People speak of favourable visions both in dream and while awake ; what are they ? "

Bhagavan : "To a Realized Soul they all seem the same".

However she persisted, "It is stated in Bhagavan's biography that Ganapati Muni had a vision of Bhagavan when he was at Tiruvottiyur and Bhagavan was at Tiruvannāmalai, and that, at the very same time, Bhagavan had a feeling of accepting homage. How can such things be explained ? "

Bhagavan answered cryptically, "I have already stated that such things are what are known as divine visions ". He was then silent, indicating that he was not willing to continue the talk any further.

(3) SAMĀDHİ

8th September, 1947

This morning, a European who was sitting in front of Bhagavan said through an interpreter :

"It is stated in the Māndūkyōpanishad that, unless samādhi i.e. the 8th and last stage of yoga is also experienced, there can be no liberation (*moksha*) however much meditation (*dhyāna*) or austerities (*tapas*) are performed. Is that so ? "

Bhagavan : "Rightly understood, they are the same. It makes no difference whether you call it meditation or austerities or absorption, or anything else. That which is steady, continuous like the flow of oil, is austerity, meditation and absorption. To be one's own Self is samādhi".

Questioner : "But it is said in the Māndūkyōpanishad that samādhi must necessarily be experienced before attaining liberation".

Bhagavan : "And who says that it is not so ? It is stated not only in the Mandūkyōpanishad but in all the ancient books. But it is true samādhi only if you know your Self. What is the use of sitting still for some time like a lifeless object ? Suppose you get a boil on your hand and have it operated under chloroform : you don't feel any pain at the time, but does that mean that you were in samādhi ? It is the same with this too. One has to know what samādhi is. And how can you know it without knowing your Self ? If the Self is known, samādhi will be known automatically".

Meanwhile, a Tamil devotee opened the *Tiruvāchakam* and began singing the 'Songs on Pursuit'. Towards

the end comes the passage, "Oh, Iswara,¹ You are trying to flee, but I am holding You fast. So where can You go and how can You escape from me ? "

Bhagavan commented with a smile : " So it seems that He is trying to flee and they are holding Him fast ! Where could He flee to ? Where is He not present ? Who is He ? All this is nothing but a pageant. There is another sequence of ten songs in the same book, one which goes, ' O my Lord ! You have made my mind Your abode. You have given Yourself upto me and in return have taken me into You. Lord, which of us is the cleverer ? If You have given Yourself up to me, I enjoy endless bliss, but of what use am I to You, even though You have made of my body Your Temple out of Your boundless mercy to me ? What is it I could do for you in return ? I have nothing now that I could call my own.' This means that there is no such thing as ' I '. See the beauty of it ! Where there is no such thing as ' I ', who is the doer and what is it that is done, whether it be devotion or Self-enquiry or Samādhi ? "

(4) REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE

10th September, 1947

At a quarter to ten this morning, just as Bhagavan was getting up to go for his usual short mid-morning walk, an Andhra young man approached the couch and said, " Swami, I have come here because I want to perform austerities (*tapas*) and don't know which would be the proper place for it. I will go wherever you direct me ".

¹ Iswara signifies the personal God.

Bhagavan did not answer. He was bending down, rubbing his legs and knees, as he often does before beginning to walk, on account of his rheumatic trouble, and was smiling quietly to himself. We, of course, eagerly waited to hear what he would say. A moment later he took the staff that he uses to steady himself while walking, and looking at the young man, said, "How can I tell you where to go for performing tapas? It is best to stay where you are". And with a smile he went out.

The young man was bewildered. "What is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed. "Being an elderly person, I thought he would tell me of some holy place where I could stay, but instead of that he tells me to stay where I am. I am now near this couch. Does that mean that I should stay here near the couch? Was it to receive such a reply that I approached him? Is this a matter for jokes?"

One of the devotees took him out of the hall and explained, "Even when Bhagavan says something in a lighter vein there is always some deep meaning in it. Where the feeling 'I' arises is one's Self. Tapas means knowing where the Self is and abiding in it. For knowing that, one has to know who one is; and when one realises one's Self what does it matter where one stays? This is what he meant". He thus pacified the young man and sent him away.

Similarly, someone asked yesterday, "Swami, how can we find the Self (Ātma)?"

"You are in the Self; so how can there be any difficulty in finding it?" Bhagavan replied.

"You say that I am in the Self, but where exactly is that Self?" the questioner persisted.

"If you abide in the heart and search patiently you will find it," was the reply.

The questioner still seemed unsatisfied, and made the rather curious observation that there was no room in his heart for him to stay in it.

Bhagavan turned to one of the devotees sitting there and said smiling, "Look how he worries about where Self is! What can I tell him? What Is, is the Self. It is all-pervading. When I tell him that it is called 'Heart' he says there is no room in it for him to stay. What can I do? To say that there is no room in the heart after filling it with unnecessary *vāsanas*¹ is like grumbling that there is no room to sit down in a house as big as Ceylon. If all the junk is thrown out, won't there be room? The body itself is junk. These people are like a man who fills all the rooms of his house chokeful of junk which is not necessary for his body and then complains that there is no room for keeping his body in it. In the same way they fill the mind with all sorts of impressions and then say there is no room for the Self in it. If all the false ideas and impressions are swept away and thrown out what remains is a feeling of plenty and that is the Self itself. Then there will be no such thing as a separate 'I'; it will be a state of egolessness. Where then is the question of a room or an occupant of the room? Instead of seeking the Self people say, 'no room! no room!', just like shutting your eyes and saying there is 'no sun! no sun!'. What can one do under such circumstances?"

¹ *Vasana*: The impression unconsciously left on the mind by past good or bad actions, which therefore produces pleasure or pain.

(5) ONLY ONE AND ALL-PERVADING SELF

11th September, 1947

Yesterday, a Sadhu came and sat in the Hall. He seemed anxious to speak to Bhagavan, but hesitant. After some time, he approached him and said, "Swami, it is said that the Self (*ātma*), is all-pervading. Does that mean that it is in a dead body also ? "

"Oho ! So that is what you want to know ? " rejoined Bhagavan. "And did the question occur to the dead body or to you ? "

"To me," said the Sadhu.

Bhagavan : "When you are asleep do you question whether you exist or not ? It is only after you wake up that you say you exist. In the dream-state also, the Self exists. There is really no such thing as a dead or a living body. That which does not move we call dead, and that which has movement we call alive. In dreams you see any number of bodies, living and dead, and they have no existence when you wake up. In the same way this whole world, animate and inanimate, is non-existent. Death means the dissolution of the ego, and birth means the rebirth of the ego. There are births and deaths, but they are of the ego ; not of You. You exist whether the sense of ego is there or not. You are its source, but not the ego-sense. Deliverance (mukti) means finding the origin of these births and deaths and demolishing the ego-sense to its very roots. That is deliverance. It means death with full awareness. If one dies thus, one is born again simultaneously and in the same place with Aham sphurana known as 'Aham, Aham (I, I)'. One who is born thus, has no doubts whatsoever."

Yesterday evening, after the chanting of the Vedas, a young European who came four or five days ago, asked Bhagavan a number of questions. Bhagavan, as usual, countered him with the question, "Who are you?" "Who is asking these questions?" Unable to get any other elucidation, the young man as a last resort asked Bhagavan which verse of the Gita he liked the most, and Bhagavan replied that he liked them all. When the young man still persisted in asking which was the most important verse, Bhagavan told him, Chapter X, Verse 20 which runs: "I am the Self, Oh Gudakesa¹, seated in the heart of all beings; I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all beings."

The questioner was pleased and satisfied and on taking leave, said, "Swami, this unreal self is obliged to travel owing to the exigencies of work. I pray that you may be pleased to recommend that this unreal self be merged into the real Self."

Bhagavan, smiling, replied, "Such a recommendation might be necessary where there are a number of different selves — one to ask for a recommendation, one to recommend and one to hear the recommendation. But there are not so many Selves. There is only one Self. Everything is in the one Self. Whom am I to address and who is to listen?"

¹ Another name of Arjuna.

(6) MANIFESTATION OF THE SELF

12th September, 1947

A devotee who came here some time back and had been listening to the various discussions in Bhagavan's presence, approached Bhagavan this afternoon and respectfully asked, "Swami, it is said that Iswara who is the reflection of the soul and appears as the thinking mind, has become jīva the personal soul which is the reflection of the thinking faculty. What is the meaning if this ? "

Bhagavan answered, "The reflected consciousness of the Self (Ātman) is called Iswara, and Iswara reflected through the thinking faculty is called the Jīva. That is all."

The devotee : "That is all right, Swami, but what then is 'chidābhāsa ?'"

Bhagavan : "Chidābhāsa is the feeling of the Self which appears as the shining of the mind. The one becomes three, the three become five and the five become many ; that is, the pure Self (*satva*), which appears to be one, becomes through contact, three (*satva, rajas* and *tamas*) and with those three, the five elements come into existence, and with those five, the whole Universe. It is this which creates the illusion that the body is the Self. In terms of the sky (*ākāśa*), it is explained as being divided into three categories as reflected in the soul ; the boundless world of pure consciousness, the boundless world of mental consciousness and the boundless world of matter (*chidākāśa, chittākāśa* and *bhūtākāśa*). When Mind (*chitta*), is divided into its three aspects, namely mind, intuition and Maker of the 'I' (*manas, buddhi* and *ahankāra*), it is called the inner

instrument, or 'antahkarana'. Karanam means upakaranam. Legs, hands and other organs of the body are called 'bāhyakarana', or outer instruments, while the senses (*indriyas*) which work inside the body are *antahkaranas* or inner instruments. That feeling of the Self, or shining mind, which works with these inner instruments, is said to be the personal soul, or Jiva. When the mental consciousness, which is a reflection of the tangible aspect of pure consciousness, sees the world of matter, it is called mental world (*mano ākāśa*), but when it sees the tangible aspect of pure consciousness, it is called total consciousness (*chinmaya*). That is why it is said, 'The mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation for man (*mana ēva manushyānām kāranam bandha mokshayah*)'. That mind creates many illusions."

The questioner : "How will that illusion disappear ? "

Bhagavan : "If the secret truth mentioned above is ascertained by Self-enquiry, the multiplicity resolves itself into five, the five into three, and the three into one. Suppose you have a headache and you get rid of it by taking some medicine, you then remain what you were originally ; the headache is like the illusion that the body is the Self ; it disappears when the medicine called Self-enquiry is administered."

The questioner : "Is it possible for all people to hold on to that path of Self-enquiry ? "

Bhagavan : "It is true that it is only possible for mature minds, not for immature ones. For the latter, repetition of a prayer or holy name under one's breath (*japa*), worship of images, breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*) visualising a pillar of light (*Jyotiṣhtōma*) and similar

yōgic and spiritual and religious practices have been prescribed. By those practices, people become mature and will then realize the Self through the path of Self-enquiry. To remove the illusion of immature minds in regard to this world, they have to be told that they are different from the body. It is enough if you say, you are everything, all-pervading. The Ancients say that those with immature minds should be told that they must know the transcendent Seer through enquiry into the five elements and reject them by the process of repeating, 'Not this, not this (*Nēti, nēti*)'. After saying this, they point out that just as gold ornaments are not different from gold, so the elements are your own Self. Hence it must be said that this world is real. People note the differences between the various types of ornaments, but does the goldsmith recognise the difference? He only looks into the fineness of the gold. In the same way, for the Realized Soul, the Jnāni, everything appears to be his own Self. Sankara's method was also the same. Without understanding this, some people call him a nihilist (*mithyāvādi*), that is, one who argues that the world is unreal. It is all meaningless talk. Just as when you see a stone carved into the form of a dog and you realise that it is only a stone, there is no dog for you; so also, if you see it only as a dog without realizing that it is a stone, there is no stone for you. If you are existent, everything is existent; if you are non-existent, there is nothing existent in this world. If it is said that there is no dog, but there is a stone, it does not mean that the dog ran away on your seeing the stone. There is a story about this. A man wanted to see the King's palace; so started out. Now, there were two dogs carved out of stone, one on either side of the palace gateway. The man standing at a distance took them for real dogs and was afraid of going near them. A saint passing along that way noticed

this and took the man along with him, saying, 'Sir, there is no need to be afraid'. When the man got near enough to see clearly, he saw that there were no dogs, and what he had thought to be dogs, were just stone carvings. In the same way, if you see the world, the Self will not be visible; if you see the Self, the world will not be visible. A good Teacher (Guru) is like that saint. A Realized Soul who knows the truth is aware of the fact that he is not the body. But there is one thing more; unless one looks upon death as a thing that is very near and might happen at any moment, one will not be aware of the Self. This means that the ego must die, must vanish, along with the inherent *vāsanās*. If the ego vanishes thus, the Self will shine as the luminous Self. Such people will be on a high spiritual plane, free from births and deaths". With that Bhagavan stopped his discourse.

(7) SIMPLICITY

13th September, 1947

Recently, while coming from Bangalore, Aurobindo Bose brought some costly pencils and gave them to Bhagavan. After answering the usual enquiries about his welfare he went away to his compound "Mahāsthān".

After he left, Bhagavan examined the pencils closely, wrote with them, appreciated their good quality, and handed them to Krishnaswāmi, saying, "Please keep these carefully. Our own pencil must be somewhere. Please see where it is and let me have it." Krishnaswāmi carefully put away those pencils, opened a wooden

box which was on the table nearby, and, after searching for a while, found a pencil and gave it to Bhagavan.

Turning it this way and that, and examining it, Bhagavan said, "Why this one ? This is from Devaraja Mudaliar. Our own pencil must be there. Give it to me and keep this one also safely somewhere". Krishnaswami searched everywhere but could not find it. "See if it is in the hall", said Bhagavan. Someone went there and came back saying it was not there. "Oh ! What a great pity ! That is our own pencil, you see. Search properly and find it," said Bhagavan. Devaraja Mudaliar, who was there, said, "Why worry, Bhagavan ? Are not all these pencils your own ?" Bhagavan said with a smile, "That is not it. You gave this one. Bose brought the other ones. If we are not sufficiently careful, somebody may take them away. You know, Swami is the common property of all people. If your pencil were lost you might feel aggrieved, for you bought it, spending a good amount of money, and gave it to me. If it is our own pencil it does not matter where it is kept. It costs half-an-anna and even that was not purchased. Some one brought it and gave it, saying it had been found somewhere. So, it is our own. As regards the others, we are answerable to the donors. No one will question us about this one and that is why I am asking for it. The others are for the use of important people. Why do we want such pencils ? Have we to pass any examination or have we to work in an office ? For our writing work, that pencil is enough." So saying, he had a search made for it and ultimately got it.

Sometime back, a similar incident happened. Some rich people brought a silver cup saucer and spoon and placing them reverentially before him, said, "Bhagavan, please use these when you take any liquid food". Bha-

gavan examined the things and passed them on to his attendants. As the attendants were placing them in the bureau in the hall, he objected and said, "Why there ? Let them be kept in the office itself". "They were given for Bhagavan's use, were they not ?" said a devotee. "Yes," replied Bhagavan, "but those are things used by rich people. What use can they be to us ? If required, we have our own cups and spoons ; we can use them ; why these ?" So saying, Bhagavan told his attendant, "Look, from tomorrow we will use our own cups. Take them out". A devotee asked, "What are those cups, Bhagavan ?" "Oh ! Those cups are made of coconut shells, smoothed and preserved. They are our cups and spoons. They are our own. If we use them the purpose is served. Please keep the silver articles carefully elsewhere," said Bhagavan. "Are not those silver articles Bhagavan's own ?" asked the devotee. Bhagavan said with a laugh, "Yes, they are. But tell me ; why all this ostentation for us? They are costly. Should we be careless, some one might steal them. So they must be guarded. Is that the job for Swami? Not only that. Somebody might think, 'after all, he is a Sanyasi and so will he not give them if asked ?' and then ask for them. It is not possible to say 'No'. Yet, if they are given away, those who presented them might resent it, as they gave the articles for Swami's use only. Why all that trouble ? If we use our own cups it does not matter how we use them or what we do with them". So saying, he sent away the silver articles, had his own cups taken out and shown to all present.

About the same time time, a devotee brought a nice walking stick with a silver handle, and presented it to Bhagavan. Turning it this side and that, and examining it, Bhagavan remarked to the devotee, "Good. It is

very nice. Please use it carefully". "But it is not for my use," he said. "I have brought it thinking that Bhagavan would use it." "What an idea!" exclaimed Bhagavan. "A nice walking stick with a silver handle should be used only by officials like you. Why for me? Look, I have my own walking stick. That is enough," concluded Bhagavan.

"When that one is worn out, you could use this one, couldn't you?" asked another devotee. "Why these costly things for me? If a bit of wood were chiselled, a walking stick could be made out of it in an instant. While I was on the hill, I used to chisel a lot of wood into walking sticks, smooth them and preserve them. Not even a paisa was spent on that account. Several people took away those walking sticks. They were our own. Why all this ostentation for us? Those cheap walking sticks will do for us". So saying, Bhagavan gave the stick back to the devotee.

As a rule, Bhagavan does not use costly things. He likes things which do not cost even a paisa.

(8) MOTHER'S GIFT

14th September, 1947

Last month, Niranjananandaswami sent a bull born and bred in the Āśramam to the Meenākshi Temple, Madurai, as a present. People there named it Basava, decorated it nicely and took a photo of it along with Sri Sāmbasiva Iyer who had accompanied it. Sāmbasiva Iyer returned with a copy of the photo besides an

old fashioned silk-fringed shawl, some *vibhūti*, *kumkum* and *prasād*¹ given to him by the Temple authorities.

Due to the great crowd of visitors since August 15th, Bhagavan has been spending the days out in the Jubilee Hall. Sāmbasiva Iyer came into Bhagavan's presence with the shawl, *vibhūti*, etc. on a large plate. The brahmins who had accompanied him recited a mantra while all of us prostrated before Bhagavan, then rose. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "Our bull has been sent to the Meenakshi Temple, did you know?" "Yes, I knew," I said. "On the day it was going, I saw it decorated with turmeric,² *kumkum* etc. and came to know of the purpose when I asked the cattle-keeper."

Holding the plate reverentially and smearing the *vibhuti* and *kumkum* on his forehead, Bhagavan said, "See, this is Meenākshi's gift." And his voice quavered as he said it. Sāmbasiva Iyer spread the shawl over Bhagavan's feet, and when Bhagavan, deeply moved, removed it with evident feeling of reverence, the attendants took it and spread it over the back of the sofa. Adjusting the shawl properly with his hands, Bhagavan, looking towards us, said, "Mother Meenākshi has sent this. It is Mother's gift". And, choked with emotion, he was unable to say more and became silent. His eyes were full of tears of joy and his body became motionless. Seeing this, it seemed to me that Nature herself had become silent. When, as a boy, Bhagavan was in Tiruchuli and someone had been angry with him, he had gone to the temple and wept, sitting behind the image of Sahāyāmba; he alone knows how the Mother consoled him and what hopes she gave him.

¹ *Vibhuti*: sacred ash. *Kumkum*: vermillion powder. *Prasad*: any flower or food consecrated by being offered to the Deity.

² *Turmeric*: a bright yellow powder of the turmeric root

Three years ago, the Ashram doctor said that hand-pounded rice would be good for Bhagavan's health. Thereupon the Āśramites approached Bhagavan with a request to take such rice, which would be specially cooked for him. When Bhagavan asked them whether the same rice would be served to all, they said that it would not be possible, as the supply of such rice was limited. Bhagavan therefore would not agree to having it however much they tried to persuade him. At last they said that they would use the hand-pounded rice for the daily offerings to the deity in the temple, for which rice is usually cooked separately and they requested Bhagavan to partake of that rice. "If that is so, it is all right. I will take it because it is Mother's prasadam," said Bhagavan. And from that day onwards, they have been cooking hand-pounded rice separately and, after offering it to the goddess in the temple, have been serving it to Bhagavan, giving what was left over to all others in his company.

Last summer, Rāmaswāmi Iyer's son got married and for the occasion there was a feast here. That day, Iyer noticed that there was white rice on the leaves of all, whereas the rice on Bhagavan's leaf was reddish, and he enquired the reason. Bhagavan, smiling, said, "This is Mother's prasadam. What is wrong with it? It is cooked specially as an offering to Mother." He then related the above incident. He once again said, "This is Mother's gift; I have accepted it only because of that".

Is this not a great lesson to those who say that they have given up visiting temples and such things?

(9) PEACE OF MIND ITSELF IS LIBERATION

16th September, 1947

The day before yesterday, an Andhra lady with her husband came to Bhagavan and asked :

"Swami, I have heard several discourses on Vedanta; I also do some meditation. Sometimes while in meditation, I feel blissful and tears come to my eyes ; at other times I do not have them. Why is that ? "

Bhagavan, with a smile, said : "Bliss is a thing which is always there and is not something which comes and goes. That which comes and goes is a creation of the mind and you should not worry about it."

The lady : "The moment the bliss that comes with a thrill of the body disappears, I feel dejected and desire to have the experience over again. Why ? "

Bhagavan: "You admit that 'you' were there both when the blissful feeling was on and when it was not ? If you realize that 'you' properly, those experiences will be of no account."

Another questioner : "For realizing that bliss, there must be something to catch hold of, mustn't there ? "

Bhagavan : "There must be a duality if you are to catch hold of something else ; but what IS, is only one Self, not a duality. Hence, who is to catch hold of whom ? And what is the thing to be caught ? "

No one replied, and with a kindly expression, Bhagavan said, "The inherent *vāsanas* are so strong. What can be done ? "

A young man came in, sat down, and gave a note to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan, after reading it, said, "See, in this note is written, 'Is peace of mind Liberation (*moksha*) ?' The reply is contained in the question itself. What else can be said ? He must have asked after knowing what Mind (*chitta*) is".

Someone asked the young man, "You know what is meant by *chitta*, don't you ? "

The young man : " *Chitta* means Mind".

Bhagavan : " Yes, but what about it ? Your question itself states that peace of mind is liberation".

The young man : " The mind is at times peaceful and at other times distracted. How are we to prevent those distractions ? "

Bhagavan : " For whose mind is that distraction ? Who is it who is enquiring ? "

The young man : " For my mind. The enquirer is myself".

Bhagavan : " Yes, that is the real thing. There is a thing called ' I ' . Peace being experienced now and then, it must be admitted that there is a thing called peace ; moreover, those feelings called desires are also of the mind ; and if desires were banished, there would be no wavering of the mind ; and if there is no wavering, that which remains is peace. To attain that which is always there requires no effort. Effort is required only for the banishing of all desires. As and when the mind wavers, it must be diverted from those matters ; if that is done,

peace remains as it is. That is Ātma, the Self, that is Liberation and that is Self".

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

Gita, VI. 26

(Restraining the restless and fidgety mind from all those objects after which it runs, one should repeatedly concentrate on the Self.)

(10) THE OMNIPRESENT

25th September, 1947

Bhagavan was reading something from a Malayalee book yesterday afternoon. Someone nearby enquired whether it were the 'Vāsishtam' being', read, and Bhagavan replied in the affirmative. A Pandit who was there began discussing the stories in the Vāsishtam, and said, "Swami, there will be several bondages for the attainment of realization, will there not ? "

Bhagavan, who was reclining on the sofa, sat up and said, " Yes, that is so ; they are the bondages of the past, the future and the present ".

" Of past bondages there is a story in the Upanishads and also in the 'Vāsudēvamananam'. A Brahmin with a large family acquired a she-buffalo and, by selling her milk, curds, ghee etc., he maintained his family. He was fully occupied the whole day with obtaining fodder, green grass, cotton seed, etc. for the buffalo and in feed-

ing her. His wife and children passed away one after the other. He then concentrated all his love and affection on the buffalo, but, after a time, the buffalo too passed away. Being thus left alone and disgusted with family life, he took to sanyāsa, renouncing the world, and began practising prayer and meditation at the feet of a Holy Teacher (Sadguru).

"After some days, the Guru called him and said, 'You have been doing spiritual practices (sādhana) for several days now ; have you found any benefit from them ?' The brahmin then related the above story of his life, and said, 'Swami, at that time I used to love that buffalo mostly because it was the mainstay of my family. Though it passed away long ago, yet when I am deeply engrossed in meditation, it always appears in my thoughts. What am I to do ?' The Guru, realizing that it was a past bondage, said, 'My dear friend, the Brahman is said to be 'astī, bhāti and priyam'. Astī means omnipresent ; bhāti means lustre ; priyam means love. That buffalo, being an object of your love, it also is the Brahman. It has a name and a form ; so what you should do is to give up your own name and form as well as those of the buffalo. If that is done, what remains is the Brahman itself. Therefore, give up names and forms, and meditate '.

"The brahmin then meditated, giving up both of them, and attained realization (jnāna). Name and form are past bondages. The fact is, that that which IS, is only one. It is omnipresent and universal. We say ; here is a table, there is a bird, or there is a man. There is thus a difference in name and form only, but That which IS, is present everywhere and at all times. That is what is known as āsthi, omnipresent. To say that a thing is existent, there must be someone to see — a Seer.

That intelligence to see is known as *bhāthi*. There must be someone to say, 'I see it, I hear it, I want it'. That is *priyam*. All these three are the attributes of nature—the natural Self; they are also called existence, consciousness, bliss (*sat-chit-ānanda*)".

Another devotee queried, "If *priyam* (Love), is a natural attribute, it should be existent no matter what the object may be. Why then is it not existent when we see a tiger or a snake ? "

Bhagavan replied, "We ourselves may not have any love for them, but every species has love towards its own kind, hasn't it ? A tiger loves a tiger, and a snake a snake. So also a thief loves a thief and a debauchee a debauchee. Thus, love is always existent. There is a picture presented to you on a screen. That screen is *asti*, omnipresent, and the light that shows the pictures is *bhāthi* and *priyam*, lustre and love. The pictures with names and forms come and go. If one is not deluded by them and discards them, the canvas screen, which has been there all through, remains as it is. We see pictures on the screen with the help of a small light in an atmosphere of darkness ; if that darkness be dispelled by a big light, can the pictures be visible ? The whole place becomes luminous and lustrous. If in the same way, you see the world with the small light called mind, you find it full of different colours. But if you see it with the big light known as Self-realization (*ātma-jnāna*), you will find that it is one continuous universal light and nothing else".

(11) BONDAGES

26th September, 1947

A devotee who had been listening to all that Bhagavan had said yesterday morning about past bondages, came and sat near Bhagavan today.

The devotee spoke : " Yesterday, Bhagavan was pleased to tell us about past bondages, but he did not tell us anything about present and future bondages".

" That is so," said Bhagavan, " but then has not Sri Vidyaranya, in his '*Panchadasi*' explained in detail about future bondages and the way in which deliverance from them can be had ? "

" I have not read the '*Panchadasi*', " said the devotee.

" Then I will tell you," said Bhagavan and proceeded to expound it :

" Present bondages are said to be of four types — '*vishaya āsakti lakshanam*', '*buddhi māndyam*', '*kutharkam*' and '*viparyaya durāgraham*'. The first of these means great desire for material things ; the second, inability to grasp the teachings and expositions of the Guru ; the third means to understand perversely the teachings of the Guru ; the fourth is to feel egoistically that 'I am learned in the Vedas', 'I am a Pandit', 'I am an ascetic'. These four are called present bondages. If it is asked how these can be overcome, the first can be overcome by tranquillity (*śama*), by curbing the evil propensities of the mind (*dama*), by detachment (*uparati*) and by indifference to external things (*titiksha*). The second type can be overcome by hearing the teachings

of the Guru over and over again ; the third by reflection or contemplation ; and the fourth by profound meditation on a thought. If, in this way, the obstacles are removed and destroyed, Seekers get confirmed in their belief that they are themselves the embodiment of the Self (*ātma swarūpa*).

" As for future bondages, they arise from acts done without anyone knowing they are sinful. How can this be discovered ? A Seeker should recognize it as a future bondage when some action presents itself which makes him feel that he wishes to do it because the doing of it is an act of human kindness and sympathy ; and so he is tempted into doing it. He does not realise that the act will be the cause of future bondage. If he thinks that, by being a non-doer (*akartā*) and worldly-detached (*asanga*), the fulfilment of the desire will not affect him and he can therefore do the act. He will become bound all the same and will be freed from the bondage only after several more births. That future bondages result in re-births is authoritatively stated in the Scriptures (*śrutis* and *smritis*) ; Vāsudēva, for instance, had one more birth, Bharata had two more, and others many more. Hence a Seeker must bear in mind these three bondages and carefully avoid them. If he does not avoid them there can be no doubt that he will have more births. ' Whosoever is released from these three bondages, for him deliverance (*mukti*) is certain,' said Vidyaranya. All this is mentioned also in the ' Vāsudēvamananam ' in which, in addition to this, a number of stories are related. The story of Bharjuva and that of Yajnapasu are particularly interesting, as also that of Āsura Vāsana. For each aspect of these bondages, a separate story is given by way of illustration. Have you not read even that ? "

"I did read it when young but did not realize that it contains such important matters. I will now look into it again, Bhagavan".

With that, the devotee took his leave of Bhagavan.

(12) BRINDAVANAM

28th September, 1947

This morning, a North Indian wrote something on a slip of paper and handed it to Bhagavan. On the slip was written : .

"If I could have audience (*darshan*) of the real form (*swarūpa*) of Lord Krishna in Brindavanam, would I find the strength to rid myself of all my troubles ? I want to have audience with Him to tell Him all my troubles".

Bhagavan replied, "Yes, what is the difficulty ? It can be done all right. After seeing Him, all our burdens will be transferred to Him. Even now, why worry about it ? Throw all the burden on Him and He will see to it".

The questioner : "If I want to see the real form of Lord Krishna, do I have to go to Brindavanam and meditate, or could it be done anywhere ? "

Bhagavan : "One should realize one's own Self and when that is done, Brindavanam is wherever one is ; there is no need to go from place to place thinking that Brindavanam is somewhere else. Those who have the urge to go, may go, but there is nothing imperative about it.

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।
अहमादिक्ष मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

(Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the hearts of all beings ; so I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings.)

— Bhagavad Gita, X. 20

Where one is, there is Brindavanam. If one enquires as to who one is and what one is, and finds out the truth, one becomes oneself — Krishna. To resolve all inherent desires into one's own Self is real surrender. After that, our burden is His."

A priest, one Sastri, who was present, enquired, "It is said in the Bhagavad Gita, XIII. 10. 'Vivikta dēśa sēvitvam aratir janasamsadi'. What is meant by 'vivikta dēśa' ? "

Bhagavan replied, "'vivikta dēśa' is that where there is nothing but the Supreme Self, the Paramātma. 'aratir janasamsadi' means to remain without getting mixed up with, or absorbed by the five senses (*vishayās*). It is these five senses that rule the majority of people. 'Vivikta dēśa' is that state in which they are in abeyance".

The questioner commented, "The 'vivikta dēśa' state to which Bhagavan refers is, I take it, the state of intuitive experience (*Aparōksha*), and if so, that state of intuitive experience can only be attained if one follows the precepts of the Guru strictly and does spiritual practice, i.e. does *sādhana*, for keeping the senses in abeyance. Is that right ? "

"Yes, that is so," replied Bhagavan. "In the '*Vāsudēvamananam*' and in other books, it is stated that one has to gain conceptual realization (*parōksha jnāna*)

with the help of a Guru by the act of hearing (*sravana*) and musing (*manana*) ; and then gain knowledge of 'intuitive experience (*aparōksha*)' by spiritual practice, and by consequent complete maturity of the mind. It is stated in the 'Vichārasāgara': 'Intuitive experience (*aparōksha*) is always present ; the only obstacles are conceptual knowledge (*parōksha*). Spiritual practice (*sādhana*), is required to remove the obstacles ; there is no question of attaining intuitive experience. It is all the same ; hearing, and the like, are necessary whether it is to know the intuitive, or to remove the obstacles. Those who are able to overcome the three faced obstacles are likened to the naked light in a windless place, or to the ocean in a waveless state. Both are true. When one feels the Self within one's body, it is like the naked light in a windless place ; when one feels that the Self is all-pervading, it is like the waveless ocean."

(13) SIMPLE LIVING

18th October, 1947

Recently, owing to some maladjustment in diet, Bhagavan's health has been somewhat indifferent. Noticing this, a rich devotee, by name Kamala Rani, sent a soup made of costly vegetables and sweet grapes to the Āśramam one morning, with a request that it might be served to Bhagavan. As it came just as Bhagavan was about to take his food, Bhagavān made no objection and accepted it.

Next day, she again prepared it in the same way and sent it to the Āśramam. But this time, looking at his attendants, Bhagavan said, "Why this daily ? Please tell her not to send it henceforth".

The lady, however, sent it the following day too.

"There ! ". said Bhagavan, " It has come again. She will not stop sending it. I should have said 'No' at the very beginning. It was my mistake to have accepted it."

A devotee said, " At present, Bhagavan is much run down and so she is perhaps sending it because a liquid preparation with grapes might be good for Bhagavan's health. It is natural".

" Oho ! " Bhagavan exclaimed, " Is that so ? And have you authority to plead on her behalf ? "

" That is not it, Bhagavan. I am saying so because I thought that such preparations might be good for the health ".

" May be so," rejoined Bhagavan, " but such things are for rich people ; not for us ".

" That devotee says that she herself will prepare it and send it," persisted the devotee.

" That is all right," replied Bhagavan, " and if so, please find out if she could supply the same thing for all the people who sit here ".

" Why to all people ? " asked the devotee.

" Then why to me alone ? " said Bhagavan.

" It is possible to do it, if it is for Bhagavan alone, but would it be possible to prepare the same costly food for everyone ? " said the devotee.

" Yes, that is just it," said Bhagavan, " everyone says the same thing, ' We will do it for Bhagavan alone '. Yet, if it is good for Bhagavan, is it not good for all ? If, with the amount spent on this preparation, broken rice were brought and rice-gruel (kanji) prepared, a hundred people could partake of it. Why this expense for me alone ? "

"Our anxiety is that Bhagavan's body should be healthy".

"That is all right," Bhagavan rejoined, "but do you mean to say that health could be maintained only if soup prepared from grapes and costly vegetables is taken? Were that so, then rich people should all be enjoying good health. Why is it then that they are more unhealthy and sickly than the others? The satisfaction that poor people get by taking sour rice-gruel, cannot be had from anything else. In olden days, when we were doing the cooking during the summer, we used to have a pot into which we put all the cooked rice left over, fill it up with water, a little buttermilk, a little rice-gruel, dry ginger and lemon leaves, and set it aside. It would get sour, cool and clear. The liquid from it used to be taken in with a pinch of salt by all of us by the tumblerful, and we used to feel very happy. No one had any illness whatsoever. Even now, if I were to drink two tumblerfuls of such water, all my ailments would disappear. But then nobody prepares it for me. 'Aye! Aye! How could we give sour milk gruel to Swami?' they say. What is to be done? To prepare soup of this sort just once will cost not less than a rupee. If, with that money, millet (*rāgi*) were bought and ground into flour, it would last for about a month for preparing gruel from it which is very healthy and nutritive. The amount spent on a single meal could be utilized for the living of a person for a month. I took all those things while I was on the hill and I used to be very satisfied. Now, who will do that? Grape juice, tomato soup and the like are offered to me. Why do I require such things? Tell her definitely not to send the soup from tomorrow".

The thing stopped there. Bhagavan told us several times that while he was living on the hill he was eating

bilva fruit (a sort of wood-apple) for some days and sustaining himself on it. Moreover, Bhagavan does not like to eat any food without sharing it with the people around him.

(14) ON BEING THE MASTER

22nd October, 1947

Bhagavan's body has become much reduced of late and some of the devotees have been saying that it is due to his not taking enough of nourishing food. Having heard this a Bengali lady brought some pieces of guava duly sprinkled with salt and chilly powder, and said beseechingly, "Bhagavan, you are getting very thin ; it is good to eat fruit like this. Please accept my humble offering".

Bhagavan said with a smile, "Who is it that is thinner ? You or I ?"

She said it was Bhagavan.

Bhagavan : "That is nice. Who exactly has grown thin will be known if the weight is taken. If you like, you may eat those fruits every day yourself. Why this for me ? It is all right ; you have brought them today, but please do not bring them again". So saying, Bhagavan took a few pieces and said to his attendants, "See how lean she is ! Please give her several of these pieces and distribute the rest to the others".

One of those who could venture to talk to Bhagavan more freely said, "Bhagavan, you have recently very much reduced the amount of food you take daily. It's not good".

"Oho!" said Bhagavan, "Who told you that? I am taking whatever I require. What good would there be in my taking more food and getting fat? By getting fat, do you know how many ailments you may suffer from? The more you eat, the greater will grow the strength of the ailment. If you eat just what is necessary, ailments will be avoided".

"Why have you given up taking even pepper-water and buttermilk?" said another devotee.

"You enquire why?" said Bhagavan. "If you observe what is being done when the meals are served, you yourself will understand. Buttermilk is brought into the dining hall in big buckets with large ladles. When taking out the buttermilk for serving me, the ladle is full, but when the same is served to the very next person, the ladle is only half full. When I saw that, I got disgusted and felt that I myself should not take any more than half a ladleful".

"Why not at least take fruit juice?" said the devotee.

"So this has started again!" said Bhagavan. "Everyone says the same thing. How will all that be possible for me?"

"What do you mean, Bhagavan? We get quite a lot of fruit; why say that it is impossible? You yourself have stated that what is offered voluntarily can be accepted".

"So that is it!" said Bhagavan. "If I did say that such offerings could be accepted, did that mean that the people at my side could be ignored?"

"True," said the devotee, "but quite a lot of fruit is received ; it can be distributed to the others too".

"All is very well," said Bhagavan, "but where have we the wherewithal to give them all ? The fruit is shown here to the Swami as an offering, a *naivedya*, and then taken away. It is kept locked in the store room ; the keys are in the charge of the store-keeper. Who will go and ask him ? In the same way, the various articles here are in the custody of some one or other. I have none, and no independence even. This is the result of being a spiritual preceptor !" said Bhagavan smiling.

It seems that some fifteen days back, someone brought some green pepper ; so Bhagavan had that pepper, some myrobalams, acetic acid, salt and other ingredients mixed, ground and made into little pills. Today Sivānandan came in to enquire whether he could get any of the pills for Bhagavan, as they are supposed to be good against phlegm and Bhagavan had been using them now and then during the cold weather. As Sivānandan had not enquired about them all these fifteen days and is doing it only now, Bhagavan said with a laugh, "I see, you have now remembered about them. Yes, yes, you have been waiting to see whether I would ask for them, and thereby test me. Were I to ask, you would say, 'What is this ? Swami has begun to ask about everything and is worrying us'. What am I to do ? They feel that if they but salute me once, I should thereafter do everything they want. People say that spiritual preceptorship (*swāmitvam*), is a matter for happiness. But see, this is what it is to be a spiritual preceptor. Would it not be good if a book is written on spiritual preceptorship ? "

"Bhagavan is saying something unusual," said a devotee.

Bhagavan replying with a smile, said, "What is there unusual about it? It is all true. 'Swami is seated on a sofa with a soft mattress spread on it. What is there for him to worry about?' That is what people think. But do they know about our troubles? That is why I say that it would be good for a big book to be written on spiritual preceptorship. If all the things that have happened here during the last years had been written in the form of a book, it would be as big as the Mahabharatham! Anyone who cares to write it, may do so even now!" he said.

"Who would write all that?" said a devotee.

"Why not?" said Bhagavan. "If a book is written, all people will then know that spiritual preceptorship consists in saying, 'Yes, yes,' and 'All right, all right'. What is the difficulty in writing about it?"

So saying, Bhagavan looked at me and with a laugh said, "Why? if you like, you can write it!"

(15) ONE POINTEDNESS

24th October, 1947

Yesterday a monkey with her baby stood in the window by the side of Bhagavan's sofa. Bhagavan was reading something and so did not notice it. After a while, the monkey screeched and one of the attendants tried to drive her away by shouting, but she would not go. Bhagavan then looked up and said, "Wait! She has come here to show her baby to Bhagavan; do not all the

other people bring their children to show them ? For her, her child is equally fond. Look how young that child is." So saying, Bhagavan turned towards her, and said in an endearing tone, "Hullo ! So you have brought your child ? That is good !" And, giving her a plantain, he sent her away.

Did you hear about what the monkeys did last Independence Day ? A few days before, on the 11th or 12th, while Bhagavan was seated in the Jubilee Hall, an army of monkeys came clamouring for fruit. Krishnaswami, the attendant, tried to drive them away by shouting, whereupon Bhagavan said, "Remember, the 15th of August is an Independence day for them as well. You must give them a feast on that day instead of driving them away."

On the 14th, while some of the Āśramites were busy making arrangements for the hoisting of the flag, the army of monkeys came again and again. One of the servants tried to drive them away. Seeing this, Bhagavan said with a laugh, "Do not drive them away please. They too have attained independence, have they not ? You must give them Bengal-gram lentils and parched rice and feast them. Is it proper to drive them away ?" "But tomorrow is the Independence Day, Bhagavan," said the servant, "not today". Bhagavan laughed, "So that's it, is it ? But when you are making arrangements for the celebrations, should they not make their own arrangements ? That is why they are busy, don't you see ? "

You know what happens with the monkeys on other occasions ? One of the attendants will be sitting with a basket to receive the fruit offered to Bhagavan by

devotees. Off and on the attendant sits with closed eyes being drowsy or gets absorbed listening to the radio. Waiting for a suitable opportunity, some of the bolder monkeys come and snatch away the fruit. When the people in the hall try to scare them away, Bhagavan would say, "When these attendants are immersed in deep meditation (*dhyāna samadhi*), the monkeys come and see to the work of the attendants. Someone has to look after the work! The attendants put the fruit into the basket, the monkeys put the fruit into their stomachs ; that is all the difference. While people forget themselves while enjoying the nectar of music, the monkeys busy themselves in enjoying the sweet juice of the fruit. That is good, isn't it!" If the monkeys come while no attendants are there, Bhagavan says, as soon as one returns to duty, "See, not one of you was here and so the monkeys have been looking after your work. They are actually helping you. So you can take some rest. When I was on the hill, they were my constant companions. You now drive them away, but in those days, theirs was the empire".

Sometimes these great monkey-warriors knock the fruit out of the hands of newcomers, while on their way to Bhagavan, and at times even snatch away the fruit which people keep by their side after having had it given back to them as *prasādam** by Bhagavan's attendant. Noticing these things Bhagavan would say, "They take their share of the fruit, why be angry with them? Theirs is the concentrated look, the '*lakshya drishti*'. Somehow they find out where the *prasādam* is kept and in the twinkling of an eye, all of them come and take away

* It is customary in India, on offering fruit or flowers to the deity or a holy man, for a portion of the offering to be returned to the devotee.

their share. Their attention is always on the fruit. That is why, in Vēdantic parlance, the monkeys' look is given as an illustration of the concentrated look, *lakshya drishti*. When the eye of the Guru winks, the disciple (sishya) understands."

(16) EXISTENCE AFTER REALIZATION

26th October, 1947

This morning after Vēda pārāyana, a gentleman who came a few days ago, enquired of Bhagavan, "Swami, it is said that though a jnāni, (a realised soul) appears to be doing all the routine things, he really does nothing. How can that be reconciled ? "

Bhagavan : "How ? There is a story for it. Two friends while travelling on business slept the night somewhere, and one of them had a dream that he and his companion had gone together to several places and had done various things. On rising in the morning, the other man had nothing to say, for he had slept soundly. But the first man asked his friend about the various places they had seen together during the night, but the second man could say nothing about them, having had no dream like the other. He merely said, 'I have gone nowhere ; I have been here only'. As a matter of fact, neither had gone anywhere ; but the first man had the illusion only of having gone. Similarly, to those who look upon this body as real, and not unreal as in a dream, as does a jnāni, it may appear real, but, strictly speaking, nothing affects the jnāni".

Remarked some other person : "It is said that the eyes of a jnāni appear to look at things, but in reality they see nothing".

Bhagavan : "Yes, the eyes of the jnāni are likened to the eyes of a dead goat ; they are always open ; never closed. They glitter but they see nothing, though it seems to others that they see everything. But what is the point ? "

The devotee continued : "It is also said that for such adepts, siddhās, there is no conditioning or limitation (*upādhi*) of space and time".

Bhagavan : "That is right. It is true that there is no such thing as conditioning or limitation, but the doubt then arises as to how the day-to-day work is done. It has therefore to be said that they have limitation. It is also stated that the limitation will be there in a subtle way until there is deliverance from the body (*vidēha mukti*). It is like a line drawn on water ; the line appears while it is being drawn, but is not there immediately after."

The Devotee : "If that is so for emancipated souls (*siddha purushās*), there will be no body after their body falls away. But Bhagavan himself has said that there are several emancipated souls on this hill. If they have no limitation (*upādhi*) how could they remain in existence ? "

Bhagavan :

क्षीरं क्षीरे यथा क्षिसं तैलं तैले जलं जले ।
संयुक्तमेकतां याति तथा ॥५५॥ त्वयात्मविन्मुनिः ॥

— Viveka Chudamani, 566.

Those who have attained complete emancipation (*jñāna siddhi*) merge with the universe after their bodies fall off, just as milk merges with milk, oil with oil, water with water. In the case of lower souls, because of some *samskaras* or latent tendencies remaining unworked out, they stay in this world, taking whatever form they please, ultimately becoming merged.

The devotee : "Why does that difference arise ? "

Bhagavan : "It arises because of the strength of their desires (*samkalpas*)".

(17) NON-ATTACHMENT, ILLUMINATION, DESIRELESSNESS

(*vairāgya, bōdha, uparati*)

28th October, 1947

I have recently been reading the 'Vāsudēvamananam'. Yesterday I read in the chapter of 'vairāgyabodhōparati' that, if Realization be attained, then liberation, (*mōksha*) can be gained even without non-attachment and desirelessness. I asked Bhagavan how that could be, as according to the Ancients, the sign of a Realized Soul (*jñāni*) is non-attachment.

Bhagavan replied, "It is true that non-attachment is the sign of a Realized Soul. But it is also stated in the same book that any apparent attachment one may be conscious of pertains to the body only and not to the Self. That attachment is a deterrent to the complete happiness of a '*jīvanmukta*', i.e., of one delivered from

worldly bonds during his lifetime ; whereas, for the ‘*vidēha mukta*’, who is one delivered from worldly bonds only at death, Realization alone is important. When it is stated that liberation can be gained by obtaining realization even without non-attachment and desirelessness, it means that liberation is gained only at the time of death. It cannot be said, however, that it will all be waste if one has non-attachment and desirelessness yet no realization, for they will enable one to attain Heaven (*punyalōka*). It is all mentioned in *Vāsudēvamananam*.”

I then asked how realization could ever be attained without non-attachment and desirelessness.

Bhagavan explained, “Non-attachment, Illumination and desirelessness (*vairāgyabhodhōparati*), these three, will not remain separate from one another. After attaining realization though one may continue outwardly to show attachment, inwardly non-attachment will necessarily be there. It is however said to be a hindrance to the complete enjoyment of bliss by a ‘*jivan mukta*’. Owing to the strength of the results of past actions, (*prārabdha*) he acts as one having inherent tendencies (*vāsanas*) ; but, strictly speaking, attachment will not touch him. That is why it is said to be the result of past actions”.

I asked whether that meant that, even though one attained knowledge of the Self, one would not be able, were past actions remain too strong, to discard inherent tendencies, and that, until those inherent tendencies were destroyed, one could not attain undisturbed peace.

Bhagavan replied, “Yes, those who have non-attachment, illumination and desirelessness, those who have attained realization, act with desires as a result of their past actions ; they know and realize that those who

have all three have reached a high state ; they alone are *jivan muktas*. Moreover, those states do not apply to their Self, but to their bodies only. In other words, attachment is not to their Self. That is why in the 'Vāsishtam' it is stated that in the third stage of the seven spiritual stages (*bhūmikas*) inherent tendencies are destroyed and, along with them, the mind also. After the fourth spiritual stage, i.e., after Realization has been attained, where is the need for the fifth and sixth spiritual stages ? If questioned, it is said that it is for the destruction of the inherent tendencies (*vāsanā kshaya*). Some explanation or other is given. So long as there is a doubt, there is an explanation. The disappearance of all doubts is realization ".

"For a Realized Soul," I asked, "to the extent to which he has non-attachment, will he to that extent have tranquillity and peace; while to the extent that his attachment grows, will he to that extent be further removed from tranquillity ? "

"Yes," said Bhagavan, "that is the meaning ". And so saying, he was again silent.

(18) KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER LANGUAGES

29th October, 1947

This afternoon at 2-30, Bhagavan was reading a Malayālam book and was speaking to a devotee seated near him. The devotee was asking, "Did Bhagavan learn to read Malayālam in his younger days ? "

"No." Bhagavan replied, "While I was staying in Gurumūrtham, Palaniswāmi used to be with me. He had

a copy of the ‘Adhyātma Rāmāyanam’ and was often reading it aloud. Every Malayāli who knows how to read, invariably reads that book. Hence, even though he did not know how to read well, he somehow managed to read it, albeit with many mistakes. I was at the time observing silence, and so I used merely to listen. After we shifted to the palmyra grove, I took the book and found it to be in Malayālam script. Having already learnt that script, I easily learned to read and write.”

“When did you learn Telugu ?” asked someone.

“When I was in the Virūpaksha Cave,” said Bhagavan. “Gambhiram Seshayya and others asked me to write out some stanzas in Telugu and so I transcribed letter by letter from Sanskrit into Telugu script and practised them. Thus I slowly learnt Telugu in the year 1900.”

I asked him when he had learnt the Nāgari script.

“That must also have been about the same time,” said Bhagavan. “Muthurāma Dīkshitar and others used to come frequently ; as they had books in Nāgari script, I used to copy the letters and in that way got used to them.”

Someone said, “We had heard that you learnt Telugu only after Nāyana came to you.”

“No,” said Bhagavan, “I learnt it much earlier, but I got used to speaking it freely only after he came ; that’s all.”

“We had heard,” said another, “that you learnt Telugu in your boyhood days.”

“I did not know how to write or read at that time,” said Bhagavan. “My grandfather’s younger brother knew Telugu ; he used to keep me by his side on the cot and

teach me Telugu alphabet. That was all. I learnt Telugu only while writing the stanzas. Subsequently, when I wrote 'Upadēsa Sāram', Rāma Yōgi wanted it in Telugu, so I wrote it in couplets (*dvipada*), closely following the Tamil metre. I then showed it to Nāyana who said that it was not a correct Telugu couplet and he taught me the metres (*ganas*) of the Telugu couplet. I wrote them down in Tamil script and then made the required alterations. When I showed it to Nāyana, he said it was correct and could be given to the printers. Later, when Balarāma Reddi got me a copy of the 'Sulakshana Sāram', I learnt the metres of the other verses, copied them on two pages of paper and pasted them in our copy of the Telugu primer. That has been sufficient for my purposes. Now, if anyone reads a verse, I can easily find out in what metre it is and what mistakes, if any, there are. I learnt one language after another in the same way. I did not deliberately learn any language," said Bhagavan.

(19) THE FOURTH STATE (*Turiyāvasthā*)

30th October, 1947

This morning, a young Tamilian asked Bhagavan, "Swami, it is said that there is no world without the individual soul and God (*Jīvēswara*). What is the meaning of it ?"

"Yes," Bhagavan told him, "the world, individual soul and God (*jagatjīvēswara*) are the embodiment of the three qualities or gunas".

"Is the Personal God, īswara, to be included in the three qualities ?" asked the young man.

"Certainly," said Bhagavan. "In that group, Goodness (*satvam*) is the Personal God (*Īswara*) ; activity (*rajas*) is the Individual Soul (*jīva*) ; and heaviness (*tamas*) is the world (*jagat*). It is said that the Self is Pure Goodness (*suddha satva*)".

A young Bengali who was present asked, "Swami, Samādhi¹ is said to be of two sorts ; 'kēvala nirvikalpa'² and 'sahaja nirvikalpa'³. What are their attributes ? "

Bhagavan looked kindly at him, and said : "One who accustoms himself naturally to meditation (*dhyāna*) and enjoys the bliss of meditation, will not lose his samādhi state whatever external work he does, whatever thought may come to him. That is called 'sahaja nirvikalpa samādhi.' 'Kēvala nirvikalpa samādhi' means stilling the mind, which is the seat of all types of inherent tendencies, and attaining to the samādhi state. People who follow that method, keep absolutely still for some time but subsequently allow the mind to follow its course. It is these two states that are called complete destruction (*nāśa*) and suppression (*laya*) ; *nāśa* is *sahaja nirvikalpam* and *laya* is *kēvala nirvikalpam*. Those who are in the *laya* (suppressed) samādhi state will have to bring the mind back under control from time to time. If the mind is destroyed, it will not sprout again ; the mind will then be something like a fried seed. Whatever is done by such people is just incidental ; they will not slide down from their high state. So long as there is the habit of

¹ Samādhi is that state of absorption within when distinction between subject and object is lost.

² Kēvala nirvikalpa samādhi is the state of absolute thought-free awareness.

³ Sahaja nirvikalpa samādhi is the state of pure awareness even during activity.

sliding down and again going up, people are not *siddhās*¹; they are mere *sādhakas*.² Those who are in the *sahaja nirvikalpa* state are like a light in a windless place, or the ocean without waves; that is, there is no movement. They cannot find anything which is different from themselves. For those who do not reach that state, everything appears to be different from themselves. That is the difference".

Two days ago, a young man in ochre robes and belonging to the Rāmakrishna Mission, asked, "What is meant by the Fourth State (*turiyāvasthā*)?"

Bhagavan replied, "There is no such thing as the Fourth State. Self itself is the Fourth State".

"Why then do people say 'the Fourth State' and 'beyond the Fourth State' (*turiya* and *turiyātīta*)?" asked the questioner.

Bhagavan replied, "What there is, is one state only; you may call it *turiya* or *turiyātīta* or what you like. The wakeful state (*jāgrat*), the dream state (*swapna*) and the state of deep sleep (*sushupti*) — these three states go on changing like the scenes in a cinema. All the three are ideas of the mind. That which is beyond these three, and which is real and permanent, is the Self itself. That is the state called the Fourth, the *turiya*, state. In common parlance, people talk of the Fourth State and of Beyond the Fourth State, and so on, but strictly speaking, there is only one state".

¹ Semi-divine beings supposed to be of great purity and holiness and said to be particularly characterized by eight supernatural faculties called *Siddhis*.

² Those who are practising to become *Siddhas*.

(20) UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

19th November, 1947

Until some time ago, the evening chanting of the Scriptures, the Vēda pārāyana, was held in the little hall, but for some time past, many people, for lack of space, have had to sit outside. Now that the Golden Jubilee Hall * has been constructed, the evening Vēda pārāyana has been shifted there. It was after this change that the Mahārāni of Baroda presented a white peacock to the Āśramam.

During the early days after its arrival, Bhagavan watched over it with great care, for it was very young. It dwelt at night in Bhagavan's old hall; being summer time, Bhagavan himself slept out in the Jubilee Hall at night, and hence, the morning Scripture chanting (the Upanishad pārāyana) was held there. But now, with the onset of winter, the attendants moved Bhagavan back into the old hall at nights. The peacock at night rested on a beam in the hall with the consequence that the floor underneath it became very dirty by the morning and much inconvenience was felt at the early morning pārāyana, some people being actually obliged to sit outside. This disgusted the attendants, and on expressing their disgust, Bhagavan said, "Why are you disgusted? Why not get a cage made and keep the peacock in it in the Jubilee Hall?" Taking the hint, a devotee immediately had a cage made.

The cage was placed in the Jubilee Hall next to the stone couch of Bhagavan; and this automatically became

* A great ridge-roofed and thatched verandah abutting on to the old hall facing the hill. Bhagavan sat on a stone couch at its western end, head to the north.

the home of the peacock. The day it was moved out to the Jubilee Hall, Bhagavan, who had been sleeping in the old hall until then, insisted on his bed too being shifted outside to the Jubilee Hall. But, as it was now very cold at night, it was feared that sleeping in the open hall would adversely affect Bhagavan's health. On the devotees expressing their fears, Bhagavan laughed and said, "The peacock came to us from somewhere. What respect is it to that guest if we make him sleep outside while we sleep inside ? If a relative comes to your house, is it proper to make him sleep on the verandah while you sleep inside the house ? If possible, we have to take him inside, or else, we too should sleep outside on the verandah." Turning to his attendants, he said, "If you are afraid of the cold outside, you can sleep inside."

The attendants said, "Sleeping outside will be bad for Bhagavan's health. If necessary, one of us will sleep there to keep the peacock company."

"Enough, enough of this !" said Bhagavan. "Will that not affect your health ? If you want to, you can sleep inside."

However much they pleaded, Bhagavan was adamant and slept that night out in the Jubilee Hall.

Next afternoon, as soon as Bhagavan went out for his walk at about 4-45, his attendant Krishnaswāmi removed Bhagavan's things from the Jubilee Hall back into the old hall and arranged for the Vēda pārāyana to be held there. Seeing this, on his return, Bhagavan said, "This is what I don't like, keeping the peacock a prisoner in its cage and leaving it there outside, while we are all here inside. Not only that ; it was because this hall was found to be insufficiently small for the Vēda pārāyana that we shifted outside to the Jubilee Hall. Has this hall,

then grown any bigger ? Are we again to allow some people into this hall while others are forced to be outside ? Why is all this ? If everything is done there in the Jubilee Hall, the peacock will not feel lonely and we shall have ample space. From tomorrow arrangements should be made accordingly. If you shift my seat to here, I will not sit here ; so take care ! ” Having spoken thus, Bhagavan had his bed transferred after food to the Jubilee Hall and slept there keeping the peacock company.

The next day, Bhagavan went back to sit in the old hall but on going out in the afternoon, Bhagavan looked at the peacock’s cage and again said, “ It is all right if, by the time I return, you have arranged for the Vēda pārāyana to be held here in the Jubilee Hall ; otherwise I will spread my towel and sit here alone. If you find it difficult to change my seat from one hall to the other, I will stay all day long in this Jubilee Hall only. It is just as you please. After all, what do I need ? This towel is enough for me.”

By the time Bhagavan returned from his walk, his seat was shifted into the Jubilee Hall. It was after this incident that the old hall was extended and that Bhagavan continued to stay there all the time. Treating all living beings that come into his presence as near and dear relatives is possible for Bhagavan alone ; is it possible for us ?

(21) REMEMBRANCE — FORGETFULNESS

21st November, 1947

At 3 o’clock this afternoon, the white peacock came into Bhagavan’s presence and began moving about in the midst of us all. A devotee, noticing how tame it was,

remarked, "This bird appears to have a knowledge of its previous births ; would it otherwise move so freely in the midst of all these people ?"

Bhagavan said, "That is why so many people here say that it is Mādhava (an old attendant of Bhagavan who had recently passed away) who has come here in this form."

The devotee asked, "If so, will it know that it was so and so in its last birth ?"

Bhagavan : "How could it ? No one knows about his previous birth. People forget, and that forgetfulness is good. In this one life alone, we are sometimes terribly worried over what had happened in the past ; could we bear such worries if we knew all about our previous births ? Knowing the facts of previous births means knowing one's own Self. If that is known this birth and the previous births will be seen to be of the mind and its desires (*sankalpa*) only. See in how many different ways this creation has been described in the 'Vāsishtam'. When Gādhi asked Krishna to show him his illusory bodies (*māya swarūpam*), He showed them innumerable forms. The story of Lavana Mahārāja is also like that and the story of Sukra is still more interesting. It is told that Sukra remained in *samādhi* without realizing that his body had meanwhile completely decayed and was no longer in existence. During that time, he had several births. At last, he was born as a Brahmin and, while leading an austere life on Mount Meru, his father Bhrugu with the God of Death (Kāla) in their human bodies (*sthūla sarīra*) went to him and told him all that had happened during his births and rebirths. Sukra then accompanied them both and saw his original body, and, with the permission of the God of Death, entered

into it. In some other stories it is told that what appeared to one person in a dream, another saw it in the waking state itself. Among these, which story is true ? ” added Bhagavan.

The devotee said, “ If something appeared to one in a dream, how could it appear to someone else in the waking state ? ”

“ Why not ? ” said Bhagavan. “ That is also a dream, though of a different sort. Like the pictures that appear on a screen, everything that appears is the creation of the mind. In reality one is not any one of those things. In this unreal world, which is like a doll’s play, it is better to forget everything rather than remember that one was that doll or this picture ”.

The devotee : “ According to the material world, we have to say, ‘ this is mine ’, must we not ? ”

“ Yes, indeed,” replied Bhagavan, “ we have to say so. By merely saying so, however, there is no need to think that we are all that, and get immersed in the pleasures and sorrows relating to that. When we ride in a carriage, do we feel that we are the carriage ? Take the example of the sun ; it shines in water in a small pot, in big rivers and in a mirror. Its image is there. But just because of that, does it think that it is all that ? The same thing with us. All the trouble arises if one thinks one is the body. If one rejects that thought, then, like the sun, one will shine everywhere and be all-pervading ”.

The devotee : “ It is for that, is it not, that Bhagavan says that the best thing to do is to follow the path of Self-enquiry of ‘ Who am I ? ’ ”

Bhagavan : "Yes ; but in the 'Vāsishtam' it is mentioned that Vasishta told Rāma that the path of Self-enquiry should not be shown to anyone who is not sufficiently qualified. In some other books it has been stated that spiritual practices should be done for several births, or for at least 12 years under a Guru. As people would be scared away if I said that spiritual practices had to be done for several births, I tell them, ' You have liberation already within you ; you have merely to rid yourselves of exterior things that have come upon you '. Spiritual practices are for that alone. Even so, the Ancients have not said all this for nothing. If a person is told that he is the Godhead, Brahman itself, and that he is already liberated, he may not do any spiritual practices, thinking that he already has that which is required and does not want anything more. That is why these Vēdāntic matters should not be told to spiritually undeveloped people (*anadhikāris*) ; there is no other reason ". And Bhagavan smiled.

A recently arrived devotee, taking up the thread of the conversation, said, "In the stanza on Śankara, 'like a city in a mirror, the Universe is a reflection in the Self ' (*viśwam darpana driśyamāṇa nagarī tulyam mījānthargatam*)'. The statement that the world is a myth and unreal is for ordinary people and not for Realized Souls. Is that not so ? "

"Yes," replied Bhagavan, "In the eyes of the Realized Soul, everything appears to be full of Brahman. The non-realized soul (the *ajnāni*) cannot see anything, however much he is told. Hence all the Scriptures are for the ordinary people only".

(22) THE PATH OF SELF-ENQUIRY

29th November, 1947

This afternoon, a devotee asked Bhagavan, "Swami, for gaining Realization, is the enquiry 'Who am I ?' the only way ? "

Bhagavan answered him : "Enquiry is not the only way. If one does spiritual practice (*sādhana*) with name and form, repetition of holy names (*japa*), or any of these methods with grim determination and perseverance, one becomes THAT. According to the capacity of each individual, one spiritual practice is said to be better than another and several shades and variations of them have been given. Some people are a long way from Tiruvannamalai, some are very near ; some are in Tiruvannamalai, while some get into Bhagavan's hall itself. For those who come into the hall, it is enough if they are told as they step in, 'Here is the Maharshi', and they realize him immediately. For others they have to be told which route to take, which trains to catch, where to change, which road to turn into. In like manner, the particular path to be taken must be prescribed according to the capacity of the practiser (*sādhak*). These spiritual practices are not for knowing one's own Self, which is all-pervading, but only for getting rid of the objects of desire. When all these are discarded, one remains as one IS. That which is always in existence is the Self — all things are born out of the Self. That will be known only when one realizes one's own Self. So long as one has not that knowledge, all that is seen in this world appears as real. Supposing a person sleeps in this hall ; in his sleep he dreams of going somewhere, loses his way, wanders from one village to another, from one hill to another, and during that time, and for days

together, searches without food or water. He suffers a good deal, enquires of several people and finally finds the correct place. He reaches it, and feeling that he is stepping into this hall, greatly relieved, he opens his eyes with a startled look. All this will have happened within a short time and it is only after he wakes up that he realizes that he had not been anywhere. Our present life is also like that. When the eye of knowledge is opened, a person realizes that he remains ever in his own Self".

The questioner asked further : " Is it true that all spiritual practices, as is said, merge into the path of Self-enquiry ? "

" Yes," replied Bhagavan, " the enquiry ' Who am I ? ' is the beginning and the end of the teachings of Vedanta. It is said that only he who has the assets of the four kinds of spiritual practice is fit for Vedantic enquiry. Of the four categories of practice the first is the knowledge of the Self and the non-Self (*ātma* and *anātma*). That means a knowledge that the Self is eternal (*nitya*) and that the world is unreal (*mithya*). How to know this is the question. It is possible to know this by enquiry as to ' Who am I ? and what is the nature of my Self ! Usually this procedure is suggested at the beginning of the spiritual practice, but generally it does not carry conviction. So all sorts of other spiritual practices are resorted to and it is only ultimately as a last resort that the practiser takes to Self-enquiry. The alphabet A B C D E etc. are learnt while young. If it is stated that these letters are the fundamentals for all education and that there is no need to study for B.A. or M.A., will people listen to such advice ? It is only after studying and passing these examinations that it will be

realized that all that has been studied is contained in those fundamental letters A B C etc. Are not all the Scriptures contained in the elementary thing, the alphabet ? That it is so, is only known after learning by heart all the Scriptures. It is the same with every one of these things. There are a number of rivers ; some flow straight, some wind and twist zig-zag, but all of them ultimately become merged in the ocean. In the same way, all paths become merged in the path of Self-enquiry, just as all languages become merged in Silence (*mouna*). *Mouna* means continuous speech ; it does not mean that it is a vacuum. It is the speech of Self, identifying with the Self. It is Self-luminous. Everything is in the Self. In Tamil Nād a great person composed and sang a song the purport of which is, 'We are like a screen, and the whole world appears like pictures on it. Silence is full and all-pervading'. Like the saying : 'ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते' (om pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam pūrṇāt pūrṇam udachyate)* — everything appears to be the same for the Realized Soul. Even though he sees something it is as good as his not seeing it".

So saying, Bhagavan was once more silent.

* "From the Fulness when the Full is taken the Full remains". The Abstract Brāhmaṇ in Its fulness is all-pervading. The Jiva in the body is also full with the knowledge of the Brahman and awareness of the world. From the former, i.e., nirvikalpa Brahman, is born the latter, i.e. savikalpa Brahman, with all the fullness of the world.

(23) THE HOLY BEACON

29th November, 1947

When the Holy Beacon is lit on Arunachala, it is a sight well worth seeing. In the Āśramam, in Bhagavan's presence, a big light is also simultaneously lit, sacramental offerings (*prasādam*) are distributed and '*Akshara Maṇa Mālā*' and other hymns are sung.

This year in particular, as there was no rain, the function went off very well. In the afternoon, from 3 o'clock onwards, the devotees started making preparations for the festival at the Āśramam. In the Jubilee Hall, the floor was decorated with lime and rice powder floral designs, while hanging from the roof all round, were mango leaf festoons. On such occasions, the crowds which come to town for this Dipotsavam (Festival of Lights) usually visit the Āśramam in the morning as they go round the hill ; whereas in the evenings it is mostly the Āśramites who are present at the Āśram celebration, and there is no crowd.

On this evening, when Bhagavan went out to the cow-shed, the attendants placed his couch in the open space facing the summit of the hill, spread the bedding on it and put a stool with all the things on it that Bhagavan usually has by him. Opposite the couch a large shallow iron pan was placed on a high stool, ghee poured into it and a wick placed in the centre ; flowers and garlands were strewn around it. Just as these preparations were nearing completion, Bhagavan came from the cow-shed with his attendants, and it was as though it were actually Lord Siva Himself arriving on the scene. Spontaneously those gathered there rose ; Bhagavan seated himself on the couch and all prostrated before him. We

then sat in rows, the men on Bhagavan's right, the women on his left, along the steps leading to the Hill. The space in front of Bhagavan was filled, not only with baskets of fruit brought by the devotees, but also with vessels of all sorts full of sweetmeats and other preparations. When the ghee brought by devotees was poured into the pan for kindling the light, the pan was overflowing. Camphor was then placed on the wick. The fragrance from the lighted incense sticks spread on all sides and created a holy atmosphere.

Bhagavan sat lovingly looking at all the devotees and related to those near him the significance of the Festival of Lights. He also pointed out the exact place where the light was to be kindled on the hill-top. After that, *Vēda pārāyana* began.

By the time the *pārāyana* was over, the sun had set. Soon, little lights in earthenware saucers were lit all round the hall and garlands of electric lights of many colours were switched on. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the lighting of the sacred beacon on the hill-top and the attendants had handed to Bhagavan a binocular with which he, too, was eagerly scanning the hill. While his gaze was concentrated on the summit of the hill, ours was concentrated on his Divine face, for it was just a reflection of Arunāchala.

With the firing of crackers at the Temple, the light on the hill-top appeared. Immediately, the 'akhaṇḍa jyoti' (uninterrupted) light, opposite Bhagavan was lighted. The Brahmins rose and chanted the mantra, 'na karmana naprajayā dhanena', and lit the camphor; kumkum and vibhūti were distributed and then all the devotees sat down. After Bhagavan had partaken of a little fruit and some sweetmeats, the rest were distributed amongst

the devotees. Immediately after that, the devotees divided themselves into two parties, one singing the hymns in the 'Akshara Mana Mālā', and the other taking up the refrain 'Arunāchala Śiva'. After that, the five stanzas beginning with 'Karunāpūrṇasudhabhde' in Sanskrit and its equivalent in Tamil were recited.

Bhagavan sat resting his cheek on his hand, slightly reclining on the pillow — his characteristic pose. His face appeared as though mirroring his Self-illumination ; what with his silence and his profound thought reflected on it. The moon rose in the east and cast its light on him as though seeking its light from him. I sat there, facing east, with my back against the almond tree. If I looked west, I had the light of the Arunāchala Hill ; if I looked ahead I had the brilliant light of the moon ; and if I looked to the right, I had the glowing light emanating from Bhagavan's face. What a sight it was, and how lucky I felt that I had the three-faced Light around me that night ! I felt an inexplicable bliss and involuntarily closed my eyes.

On hearing the sound of the dinner bell, I opened my eyes. Bhagavan was looking steadily at me, and that look was more than I could stand ; involuntarily my head hung down. Bhagavan smiled and entered the dining room, the devotees following him.

After the meal, with Bhagavan's permission, we, the devotees, started for the walk round the hill. I shall write to you about it some time later.

(24) POOR MAN'S MITE

30th November, 1947

I have already written to you that on the night of the festival of the Holy Beacon, (i.e. the Deepam Festival) when the Beacon at the top of the hill is lighted, we took the permission of Bhagavan and went round the hill. Hitherto, the usual practice had been to go round the hill before the festival, not after. But this time, however, we started at night, after the evening meal. There were about a hundred of us.

With Bhagavan in our hearts and with the Beacon Light on the top of the hill before our eyes, and with the full moon brightly shining, we started out on foot. Devotees who had had the privilege of accompanying Bhagavan on his walks round the hill in his earlier days, began to tell us about their experiences : "Bhagavan used to sit here" ; "here we used to cook" ; "this happened here" ; "Bhagavan told us about this, there". While they were relating such incidents, we did not feel the fatigue of walking, for we were absorbed in the tales. But for the fact that we wanted to get back for the Vēdapārāyana at 5 a.m., we might only have returned at day-break. As it was, we returned at 3 a.m.

I will now tell you some of the things the devotees told us that night :

As we were approaching the Unnāmalai tank, a devotee said, "When Bhagavan went round the hill, he used to sit here for some time so that those who were lagging behind might catch up with the party. Let us also sit here and wait for a while". We accordingly all sat there for some time.

"How long ago was it that Bhagavan gave up going round the hill?" I asked.

"Till 1926 Bhagavan used to do it. That was an exhilarating experience", said Kunjuswāmi, one of the old devotees.

"Why not tell us some of the incidents of those days?" we said. Kunjuswāmi agreed and began to tell us as follows:

"One day, we all felt like going round the hill with Bhagavan. When we told him, he readily consented and we started that afternoon immediately after food. It was usual for Bhagavan to walk slowly while going round the hill, so Venamma hearing that he had gone and confident that she could catch up with the party in no time, started out with a big basket of provisions.

"We were passing Śōṇa Thirtham when Bhagavan noticed Venamma at a distance, approaching, and he said, 'There, you see, Venamma is coming; someone must have told her and sent her with a basket of food. However much I protest, people will not give up these things. There she is, with a heavy load on her head. All right; this is going to be a punishment for her.'

"So saying, he began to walk fast. Could she overtake him if he walked fast? Let us see. She continued to hurry, panting and fretting all the time, but did not stop walking. Bhagavan continued to walk in this way until we passed the Gautamāsram, when he looked back. He could see that she, too, was walking fast, and his heart melting at the sight, he led us to a mango grove that was nearby the road. .

"Standing under the shade of one of the trees, Bhagavan said, 'We will stop here. There is a well, and

if not here, we may not get water anywhere else near. I was hoping that she would give us up, but she would not. She is tired and is panting for breath. What a shame ! ' So saying, he sat down.

" Unable to discover our whereabouts, and coming up to the trees, Venamma began anxiously saying, ' Where has Bhagavan gone ? There is no sign of him anywhere '. When Bhagavan heard this, he began laughing, whereupon she traced us to where we were and joined us. After eating what she had brought us, we began our walk again, Venamma now with us. From that day, we named the tree Venamma's mango tree.

" Bhagavan used to tell us that sometimes he started for *pradakṣiṇa* at night and returned by daybreak. It was the usual thing to start so. Sometimes, however, we would start in the morning, with cooking utensils to cook food at noon either at Śōṇa thirtham or at Gautamāśram or at Pachayamman Shrine, eat, rest and return to the Āśramām in the evening. Before the Āśramam grew to its present size, we would go round leisurely, sometimes taking two days, or three days or even a week, camping en route.

" On one occasion, we started to go round in the morning with the intention of returning the same evening. We stopped at the Gautamāśram, cooked our food, ate it and after taking some rest, packed all the milk, sugar, buttermilk, etc., that remained and started walking again. As we were approaching Adi Annamalai, Bhagavan began walking off on a side road and very fast. Thinking that he wished to avoid the crowds on the main road, we followed him.

" After going along a path for about half a furlong, we came to a tank. At the edge of the tank and under

a tree, sat an old man, his body covered by a blanket and holding a small pot in his hand. This old man, whenever he heard that Bhagavan was coming round the hill, would await Bhagawan's arrival on the road and bring him something to eat. Not seeing him on the road, and lest the poor man should be troubled at missing him, Bhagavan had made the detour.

"Bhagavan, on seeing him, called him by name and began talking with him very simply. The old peasant prostrated before Bhagavan, then stood with folded hands, saying nothing. 'What is the matter?' said Bhagavan, 'Why is it that I do not see you anywhere these days? Are crops and cattle all right? How are the children?' And then, 'What is in that pot?' queried Bhagavan.

"Very hesitantly, the old man said, 'Nothing particular, Swami. I came to know that you were coming. I wanted to bring something as usual to offer you, but there was nothing in the house. When I asked my old woman, she said, 'There is ample food in the cook-pot; you can take it to them'. Unable to decide what to do, I put some of the food into this small pot, but ashamed to face you with only this sort of food to offer you, I was sitting here, Swami.'

"Bhagavan, seemingly very pleased, exclaimed, 'Oh! Cooked food, is it? That is excellent. Why be ashamed? It will be very good. Let me have it". As the old man was still hesitating, Bhagavan took the pot from him, sat down under a tree and told his followers to unload all the things they had brought. We unloaded accordingly. Bhagavan took out from among the cooking things, a big open-mouthed tin-lined vessel into which he put all the food, poured in a lot of water, and mixed it well into a paste with his hand; then from some left-overs amongst

our things, he took out some limes and squeezed the juice into the mixture, poured in some buttermilk, and made the whole thing into a liquid. Finally he mixed some salt and dry ginger powder, then took out a tumblerful of the liquid, drank it, and said, 'Oh, this is delicious !' Then looking at us all, he said, 'All of you, mix some sugar with that milk left over and drink it ; our luggage will be lighter. I have this food ; so what need have I for the milk ? This is first rate food for me in this hot weather. It is also very nourishing, and has many other good qualities too. But you wouldn't like it, so drink the milk, and please give my share of it and the sugar to this old man '.

" We accordingly mixed the sugar with the milk and after giving some to the old man, we drank the rest. Bhagavan was meanwhile talking sociably with the old farmer and taking two or three tumblerfuls of the liquid preparation saying that it was like nectar. He then said to the old man, ' My stomach is quite full. I feel that I shan't be able to take any food tonight. Take the rest of this liquid food home '. So saying, he gave the remaining food to the old man, who accepted it as though it were nectar. Wiping the tears of joy that were welling up into his eyes, he took leave of us and went off to his cottage.'

" Until recently ", I said, " that old man used to come to see Bhagavan every now and then. Vyāsa wrote in glowing terms in the Bhāgavatam about the beaten rice that Kuchēla presented to Lord Krishna. Had he seen this Lord's kindly act, how much more glowingly would he have written ! "

(25) GREATNESS OF NON-ATTACHMENT

5th December, 1947

When yesterday, during some conversation, Bhagavan was describing the greatness of non-attachment (*vairāgya*), I said that in the Telugu *Bhāgavatam*, in the second canto, apropos of Śuka Yōgi, there is a nice verse about non-attachment, explaining the path of deliverance. At Bhagavan's request, I read aloud the verse, of which the following is a translation :

" Are there not nice places on the earth on which
to lie down ?
Why the cotton bedding ?
Are there not hands which nature has given ?
Why all the various implements for eating and
drinking ?
Are there not fibre cloth, deer-skin and kuśa
grass for wear ?
Why fine cloth of different varieties ?
Are there not caves in which to live ?
Why these houses and palaces ?
Do not the trees yield juicy fruits ?
Do not the rivers give sweet water ?
Do not good housewives give alms ?
Why then serve those who have become blind and
proud on account of their wealth ? " *

* Original Telugu text :—

" సీ॥ కమనీయ భూమి భాగములు లేకున్నవే
వదియుండుటకు దూడి వరపులేల
సహజంబులగు కరాంజలులులేకున్నవే
భోజనభాజన పుంజమేల "

Having listened with great interest, Bhagavan said emphatically, "That is right. In this part of the country, one of our Ancients wrote almost similarly, 'O Lord, Thou hast given me a hand to use as a pillow under my head, a cloth to cover my loins, hands wherewith to eat food ; what more do I want ? This is my great good fortune ! ' That is the purport of the verse ; is it really possible to say how great a good fortune that is ? Even the greatest of kings wish for such happiness. There is nothing to equal it. Having experienced both these conditions, I know the difference between this and that. These beds, sofa, articles around me — all this is bondage."

"Is not the Buddha an example of this ? " I said.

"Yes," said Bhagavan, "when he was in the palace with all possible luxuries in the world, he was still sad. To remove his sadness, his father created more luxuries than ever. But none of them satisfied the Buddha. At midnight he left his wife and child and disappeared. He remained in great austerity for six years, realized the Self and, for the welfare of the world, became a mendicant (Bhikshu). It was only after he became a mendicant that he enjoyed great bliss. Really, what more did he require ? "

వల్గులాజినకూవకులులేకున్నవే
 కట దుకూల సంఘంబులేల
 గొనక్కొని వసియింప గుహలేకున్నవే
 ప్రాసాద సౌధాది వటలమేల
 ఫలరసాదులు గురియవే పాదపములు
 స్వాదు జలముల నుండవే నకలనదులు
 భొన్సిగ బిషింబుపెట్టరే పుణ్యనతులు
 ధనమదాంధుల కొలువేల తాపసురకు".

"In the garb of a mendicant he came to his own city, did he not ? " asked a devotee.

"Yes, yes," said Bhagavan. "Having heard that he was coming, his father, Śuddhōdana, decorated the royal elephant and went out with his whole army to receive him on the main road. But without touching the main road, the Buddha came by side roads and by-lanes ; he sent his close associates to the various streets for alms, while he himself in the guise of a mendicant went by another way to his father. How could the father know that his son was coming in that guise ! Yaśōdhara (the Buddha's wife), however, recognized him, made her son prostrate before his father and herself prostrated. After that, the father recognized the Buddha. Śuddhōdana, however, had never expected to see his son in such a state and was very angry and shouted, 'Shame on you ! What is this garb ? Does one who should have the greatest of riches come like this ? I've had enough of it !' And with that, he looked furiously at the Buddha. Regretting that his father had not yet got rid of his ignorance, the Buddha too, began to look at his father with even greater intensity. In this war of looks, the father was defeated. He fell at the feet of his son and himself became a mendicant. Only a man with non-attachment can know the power of non-attachment," said Bhagavan, his voice quivering with emotion.

**(26) SELF-ENQUIRY ESSENTIAL IN
ALL WALKS OF LIFE**

7th December, 1947

Recently some people in responsible positions in Madras came here and stayed for some days. On one of the days, they went to the Gurumūrtham and Pravālagiri caves on the hill, where Bhagavan had lived long ago, and returned in time for the evening Vēdapārāyana. After the pārāyana, when Bhagavan was telling us about his life in the Pravālagiri cave, and enquiring whether they had seen this or that there, one of the party said to him, "Bhagavan tells us most interestingly about those places we have just seen, but by the time we reached the Pravālagiri cave and went into the room there, we were thoroughly exhausted. Bhagavan stayed there for a long time and we now realize how completely Bhagavan must have felt that the body was not his. Swami, how can people like us be saved from our materialistic outlook? If we ask, you will surely say, 'It is enough if you go on with Self-enquiry : Who am I ?' How is that possible for us who are family people and are doing our respective jobs? If the mind goes on with worldly affairs, how can we get peace of mind?" Bhagavan simply remained silent, listening to them quietly.

This morning when I got to the Āśramam, one of the Asramites was speaking freely with Bhagavan and was saying, "Yesterday evening, the people who came from Madras asked you some questions, but you did not answer. Why was that? In the past when Sivaprakāsam Pillai wrote a verse beginning 'Udalinai veruthum' I am told that you were also silent. Why, Bhagavan? Does it mean that no one can become a Realized Soul, a *jnani*, unless he lives in a lonely place like that?"

"Who said that?" Bhagavan replied. "The nature of the mind is determined by its former actions, its *samskāras*. People are able to continue to do all their work and yet pursue their Self-enquiry and ultimately become Realized Souls. Janaka, Vasishta, Rāma, Krishna and others like them, are examples of this. Again, for some it would appear impossible to do this and they have to go to solitary places to become Realized Souls through Self-enquiry. Of these, Sanaka, Sanandana, Suka, Vāmadeva, are amongst the examples. Self-enquiry is essential for whomever it may be. It is called 'human effort (*purushakāra*)'. The course of the body follows according to our actions, *prārabhdha*. What more can we say about it?" added Bhagavan.

(27) AWARENESS OF THE SELF GENERATED BY ACTION

(Vṛitti Janya Jnānam)

13th January, 1948

This morning one of the inmates of the Āśramam, Sri Sundarēswara Iyer, sat near Bhagavan's sofa, book in hand, waiting and watching Bhagavan's face for a favourable sign, then quietly asked, "In this book it is written in one place '*Manō Vṛitti Jnānam*'. What is the meaning of *Manō Vṛitti Jnānam*?"

"It means that the Self (*ātma*) cannot be realized at all unless there is mental action (*manō vṛitti*). They say, 'We must know the Self, we should know the Self; and we have known the Self'. How do they know it? Let us agree that we are in existence. Even so, is it not necessary that there should be some action (*vṛitti*), to

know that? Hence, the action of the mind which is turned within is called Knowledge (*vijnāna*) and that which is turned without is called Ignorance (*Ajnāna*). *Vijnāna* is also called Mind or *Chittam*. When that *vritti* is *Antarmukham* (turned inward) it has to be called ‘*Buddhi*’ or ‘*Aham*’. All these put together are known as ‘*Antahkarana*’. *Aham* is *Achalam* (steady; immovable). But with the aid of this *Antahkarana* the *panchabhūtas* (the five elements) came into existence. These elements individually and collectively multiplied and the body with its various limbs came into existence. Discarding the present creation, which has come into existence with the support of *Antahkarana*, when the mind becomes *Antarmukham*, *Vritti Janya Jnānam* (awareness of the Self generated by action) appears. That means, you will know the source of action (*vritti*). That source, or origin, is called ‘*Aham sphurana*’, or the Self. However, it is only by the mind that that is to be known. That is why it is called *Manō Vritti Jnānam*. That means it is the mind which is ‘*suddha satvam*’ (*suddha* = pure; *satvam* = the first and the best of the three *gunās* which are supposed to constitute the external world). It is that which manifests itself in innumerable ways and it is that which remains still, all by itself. You may call it by whatever name you like; any name,” said Bhagavan.

A person who had recently arrived and who had been closely following the conversation, enquired of Bhagavan, “Swami, is it a fact that a *Jnāni* will not have any *prārabhdha* except that of *parēccha*? ” “Yes, it is the same thing. The *prārabhdhas*, ‘*iccha* (desires), *anichha* (no desires) and *pareccha* (desires of other people)’ will be common to *Jnānis* and *Ajnānis*. Experience also is the same. The difference, however, is that, for the *Jnāni*,

there will be no feeling that he is doing anything and so there will be no bondage, while the Ajnāni feels that he is doing everything and so there will be bondage. Mind alone is the cause of bondage and release. The saying

“मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः”

“Mano Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandhamokshayoh.”

from the Upanishads ‘Mind alone is the cause of bondage and release’ asserts that mind is the cause of everything. For that mind, desires are the form. If the root cause of desire is discovered, there won’t be any bondage. That root is the Self. If one knows one’s Self, whatever desires may come or go, they will not worry one,” said Bhagavan.

(28) THE PASSING AWAY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

6th February, 1948

On the night of the 30th, the news of Mahātma Gandhi’s death became known everywhere. I heard the news at home only, because women cannot be in the Āśramam in the nights. I went at 7-30 next morning. A prayer was being broadcast over the radio. The news of the death was in the newspapers, and Bhagavan reading it and hearing the prayer, said, “This is the prayer of people who prayed like that throughout his life”. The song ‘Vaishnava Janatō’ was broadcast over the radio and Bhagavan listened to it sadly.

At 9-45, Bhagavan was about to go out when a newspaper reporter came and requested him to give his views on the tragedy so that they might be published.

Bhagavan, his voice choked with emotion, said, "For the Mahatma's death in this tragic manner, every person's heart is mourning. What is there in particular that I could say? Who is there who is not grieved? If I say anything, you will publish it and then, one after another, people will come and ask me. What is the good of it?"

So saying, Bhagavan sent the reporter away and went for his walk. On his return, 'Vaishnava Janatō' was again being broadcast and tears fell from Bhagavan's eyes.

At 4-30 that afternoon, all the ladies began to sing 'Raghupati Rāghava Rājārām'.¹ With tears in his eyes Bhagavan signed to us to continue. At 5 o'clock the conch shell blew and in view of the Mahātma's death a special ārati (waving of lights) was offered in the Mother's temple; when the sacred ash and vermillion powder were brought, Bhagavan took them with great reverence.

The day before yesterday, while reading the paper, Bhagavan remarked to someone sitting near him, "Look, didn't a comet appear some time ago? It is written in this paper that the death of the Mahātma was due to that. So the first result of it is now over".

What exactly was in Bhagavan's mind when he said that? Meanwhile, he took up another paper and on reading it, said, "The person who fired the shot, it seems, came up to the Mahatma and, after bowing down, asked him, 'Why have you come so late today, Sir?' The Mahātma replied that it was due to some work. The shot was fired immediately after." Bhagavan then drew a parallel from the Rāmāyana, saying, "It seems that after

¹ A favourite chorus of Mahatma Gandhi, sung in praise of the Lord Rama.

Rāma killed Rāvana, he forgot that he, Rāma, had to go to Vaikuntha. So the Dēvatās took counsel among themselves and then sent Yama, the God of Death, to him. Yama came in the garb of an ascetic, and respectfully said, 'The work for which you have come is now over ; please come to heaven'. This is similar ; 'Swaraj has been obtained ; your work is over ; why are you still here ? Shouldn't you go back ? It is already late'. Thus the Mahātma appears to have been sent away".

I asked, "The story you have just told us is from the 'Uttara Rāmāyana', is it not ?"

Bhagavan : "Yes, but not only there. It has been written in another book that, in the case of Krishna, the arrow of Vyādha was the cause of His death ; similarly it happened with the Mahātma".

Yesterday, Harindranāth Chattōpādhyāya² showed a photo of Mahātma, and said, "It is a pity that there was never any meeting between Gandhi and Bhagavan".

Bhagavan : "Sometime ago, he came to Tiruvannāmalai. A meeting had been arranged for him to be held on the road around the hill, beyond the Āśramam. People here thought that he would come to the Āśramam on his way back, but owing to the pressure of the crowds it was impossible, and he went away direct to the station. It seems that he very much regretted this afterwards. Shankarlāl Bunker was very keen on bringing him here, and in 1938, when Rajendra Prasad and Jamnalal Bajaj came here and saw Skandāsram, they wanted to induce the Mahātma to stay there for some time. But it did not happen. It at Sabarmati, or at Wardha anyone said that he was mentally depressed, the Mahātma used to say, 'Go

²A brother of the famous Indian poetess Sarojini Naidu and patriot, and himself a fine poet.

to Ramanāsramam and come back after a month's stay there'. When Rāmaswāmi Reddiar went to see the Mahātma immediately after taking office as Chief Minister, Madras State, the Mahātma, it seems, asked him for how long he had been going to the Ramanāsramam. When he answered that he had been going there for over thirty years, the Mahātma said, 'Is that so? I have tried thrice, but so far have not been able to go there'. What could he do? How could he come here when he was not left alone for one moment?"

Bhagavan read in today's paper a report to the effect that the Mahātma had had from a dream the night before the tragedy, a premonition of his death, and that therefore, he had quickly disposed of his papers which had caused the delay in his coming to the prayer. Bhagavan commented, "Yes. For enlightened people, will there not be that much of premonition? They will know, but will not tell others",

(29) EQUALITY

7th February, 1948

It is now fifteen days since our nephew Tilak had come here from London. The results of his examination were not yet out. His father, having written to him to come home quickly, he decided to leave here on 30th of last month.

On the evening before leaving, he went to the Bazaar to buy raisins, dates etc. for offering to Bhagavan. On the 30th, we placed them all on a tray and took them to the Āśramam in time for breakfast. The kitchen people asked me to serve them myself, and as I had no experience

of serving in the dining hall, I took them to Bhagavan first. In a tone showing that he was not pleased, he asked me what it was. I told him that my nephew had brought some fruit. Bhagavan nodded ; "All right. Give me one of each variety". After serving Bhagavan accordingly, I served the others likewise. But towards the end, it was found that only a few bananas were left and so one of the attendants cut them into small bits and served them equally to the last ten people.

With an expression of disgust, Bhagavan said, "This is what I don't like. Why do you serve when you cannot give the same quantity to all people ?" And he began recounting all other similar mistakes. The people all left quietly after eating. As Bhagavan was about to get up, after massaging his legs a little, Tilak and I went up to him, and prostrating before him, I told him that Tilak was leaving.

Bhagavan said, "I see. When fruit was brought I thought he had passed his exam. So he is going to his native place ? Very good." So saying, and pointing me out to the people near him, he said, "She served me first instead of serving all the others first".

"I am sorry," I said, "I was new and so made the mistake".

"That is all right," Bhagavan said, "that is why I am telling you. If you serve Bhagavan after you serve all the others, there will be equal distribution. If by chance nothing remains, it does not matter if I don't get anything ; if all eat, I am satisfied even if I do not get my share. Serving should always be on that principle ; it is a good principle. If all people here eat, is it not tantamount to Bhagavan's eating ?"

I said, "That is so, I am sorry the mistake was made."

Bhagavan said, "All right, don't worry, it does not matter."

I do not know whether you have noticed that in the Āsramam three times a day, when the bell goes, a small portion of all the dishes, including rice-cakes (*iddlies*) are taken out for feeding the cows, crows, dogs, monkeys and any poor people who happen to be in the Asramam at the time. If that is not done first, Bhagavan will not come for food, nor will he keep quiet unless they are fed. If squirrels and peacocks come, groundnut kernels are given. If anyone at any time shows disinclination to serve like that, Bhagavan will not tolerate it, and says, "All right. Go, if you like. They have come here in the same way as we have all come, and they will get their food as we all get it. You want to serve us with respect, saying 'Swami, Swami', but you serve them with curses ; Did we purchase them and bring them here ? They have come just as we did ; why this disrespect to them ? "

Bhagavan said all this because I had forgotten the principle and had made a mistake. One peculiar thing to note in this connection is that Bhagavan had said, "When the fruit was brought, I thought he had passed his examination", and on verification, we found that the results were out in London on that very day. Brother sent a telegram yesterday to say that the boy had passed his exam.

The voices of great souls do not go in vain, you see !

(30) NIHILISTS AND ADVAITINS

8th February, 1948

When I went into the hall this morning, everything was quiet. The smoke of the incense-sticks enveloped the whole hall and a sweet smell was emanating from all sides. Bhagavan had finished reading the papers and was sitting in a calm atmosphere. Krishnaswāmi was winding the clock. Unexpectedly someone asked, "Nihilists and Advaitins go on arguing among themselves without end. What exactly are their differences ? "

The clock struck the hours 'Tung, Tung.' With a smile, Bhagavan said, " You want to know the differences of opinion ? Look here. Just now, the clock has been wound ; it has been working and has struck the hours. 'There must be someone to wind the clock ; otherwise the clock will not work,' say the Advaitins. 'It is admitted that there must be someone to wind the clock ; there must then be someone to give the power or the ability to that someone, and so on. If we proceed on that basis, there will be no beginning and no end, and so there is no such person as 'doer' (*Kartā*),' say the Nihilists. These are the differences of opinion. For instance, take this towel. It is not separate from the cotton. What does that mean ? The cotton is first changed into seedless cotton, then into yarn and finally into cloth. For doing all that there must be someone, and so the weaver is called the 'doer', and it is admitted that the various colours and varieties of a cloth are not different from the basic thing, namely, the cotton. In the same manner, the Advaitins say that though there is a 'doer' for the innumerable varieties that go to make up the world, none of them is different from that which Is, namely,

Existence (Sat). There must be pots—big and small—but they are all mere earth. If anyone of them gets broken, we say that the pot is lost. But what is it that is lost? Only the name and the form. When name and form are lost, the earth still remains, as earth. But then, pots can be made only if there is a potter. So the Advaitins say there is a ‘doer’ as an efficient cause. Nihilists say, ‘No’. Arguments increase but the net result is zero. There will be no difficulties if they find out who it is who is arguing.”

“Why then these arguments?” said the questioner.

“That is because all that is inside of a person must come out. There will be several thoughts inside,” said Bhagavan.

One of the devotees who heard this, said, “What, Bhagavan? You say that which is inside will always come out. How will it come out? What is there inside?”

Bhagavan smilingly said, “Unless there is something inside, how can anything come out? Unless some desire is born inside, nothing appears outside. Desire is born inside only. It develops into a big thing and comes out ultimately.”

(31) BHAGAVAN'S FIRST MANUSCRIPT

27th March, 1948

When I was copying out Part II of these letters, beginning with ‘*drishtim jnānamayīm kritvā*’, I did not know where exactly the stanza occurred and I therefore went to the Āśramam a little earlier than usual to ask Bhagavan. Bhagavan was seated at leisure and I

approached and enquired in what book the stanza was to be found. He kindly told me that it was in the 'Tejobindu Upanishad' and that Sankara had written the same thing in his 'Āparōkshānubhūti' of which the relative stanzas were :

दृष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा पश्येद् ब्रह्ममयं जगत् ।
 सा दृष्टिः परमोदारा न नासाग्रावलोकिनी ॥
 हृष्टु दर्शन दृष्टीनां विरामो यत्र वै भवेत् ।
 दृष्टिः तत्रैव कर्तव्या न नासाग्रावलोकिनी ॥

" Which means," said Bhagavan, " that the aim (*drishti*) is not to concentrate on the tip of the nose or between the eyebrows. It should be to concentrate on the place where all the attributes of the Seer, the seen and the act of seeing are dissolved. The meaning is that, when the aim '*jñānamaya*', that is Realization is attained through meditation enabling a man to understand his own nature and to see the way to be united with the Supreme Spirit, then the whole Universe appears to be full of the Brahman."

The 'Aparōkshānubhūti' was in the library, but I hesitated to take it from there as I have to ask somebody to get it. At the same time, I did not remember the stanzas in full and was wondering what to do. Sensing the situation, Bhagavan asked one of the attendants to take out Palaniswāmi's small notebook which was in the drawer. The attendant took it out, shook the dust from it and handed it to me. It is a very small notebook, written in Malayālam characters. Bhagavan took a pen and paper to write. I murmured, " There is a copy of the 'Aparōkshānubhūti' in the library, I think".

"Why bother?" said Bhagavan, "I will write it out myself." And so saying, without my asking him, he copied the two stanzas from the notebook. I was overwhelmed with joy and asked him, "Have you copied the stanzas of Sankara as they are, or have you just written down their meaning in stanzas of your own?"

"I merely copied them from the book," said Bhagavan. "In most of the small books written by Sankara, most of the stanzas have been copied en block from the Upanishads. Palaniswāmi asked me to copy out and give him some stanzas of Sankara, but where were notebooks or paper with us at that time? I collected every scrap of paper I could, stitched them together into a notebook, wrote out the stanzas and gave them to him. In this small notebook, selections from about ten books of Sankara have been written."

"So, this is the first book?" I asked.

"Yes," said Bhagavan, "At that time we had nothing but a pot; we did not have even a towel then. In the early days of our stay in the Virupāksha cave, Palaniswāmi alone had a towel to wrap round him. The cave had no iron doors then, it had a wooden door with a wooden latch. We used to bolt it from the outside with a small stick, go round the hill, wander hither and yon, return after a week or ten days, when we would open the door with the help of another stick. That was our key at the time; no need to keep it anywhere! This notebook was the only article we took with us. As Palaniswāmi wore a towel, he used to fold the book and tuck it into his waist. That was enough for us. This book was the first beginning of our (book) family,'" said Bhagavan laughing.

"Did you write this from the Nāgari script?" asked another devotee.

"Yes," Bhagavan told him, "and that too, only because Palaniswāmi asked for it. At that time, and even afterwards, I did not write anything of my own accord".

"Why does Bhagavan require to do all this? He does everything for the sake of others," remarked the questioner.

"Yes, that is so," said Bhagavan, "and of the 'family' that has grown since then, this book is the first". And he showed the book to us all.

(32) KAILĀSA

4th April, 1948

This morning a devotee brought an old copy of the 'Peria Purānam' and gave it to Bhagavan. Reading the story about Sundaramūrthy going to Kailāsa, Bhagavan said, "It seems that Sundaramūrthy found that after his own arrival the Chera Raja had arrived on horse-back almost immediately. The Raja asked him, 'How came you here without my calling you?'" So Saying, Bhagavan read a verse from it. A Tamil youth, who was present, said, "Where is that Kailāsa, Swami?" "Kai-lāsa! It is at the very place where we are. First of all, tell me where we are?" said Bhagavan.

"That's not it, Swami. The Kailāsa of which you have just read, that Sundaramūrthy had gone to; does it really exist? If so, where is it? Please favour me with a proper reply," said the young man.

"I have told you already," said Bhagavan. "We have come here now. From here we will go to some

other place. If all this is true, then that also is true. There, also, a Swami will be found seated on a raised pedestal. Just like this there will be devotees around. They ask something ; he replies something. That will also be like this. If you look at the thing from the point of view of the body, that is how it is. If, however, you look at it from the point of view of truth, Kailāsa is wherever we are. It is neither born, nor grows nor dies. Only when we realize that there is nothing, that which then remains, is Kailāsa."

"How will that be known ?" the young man asked.

"Everyone knows that he is in existence. You were in existence when you were born, when you were a year old, when you were in middle age and when you were old. YOU have not changed ; it is only the body that has changed. To know that your SELF has not changed, this illustration itself is enough," said Bhagavan.

Giving up that line of questioning, the youth again asked, "It is said that a *Jnāni* does not have happiness or sorrows, bodily ailments, or the like ; Sundarar and Appar are reported to have jumped with joy when they had a vision of God. Even Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa is reported to have grieved terribly when he did not get a vision of the Holy Mother and to have gone into ecstacies when he did get a vision. Not only that ; when Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa had some bodily ailment, he used to cry out for Mother. What does it mean ? Do *Jnānis* have happiness and sorrow ?"

Bhagavan answered him, "You say all that in relation to the body, don't you ? It is not possible to judge a *Jnāni* by his bodily ailments. Mānikyavāchakar sang a hymn the purport of which is 'O Iswara you have showered on me your blessings even before I asked for them. How kind of you ! Even so, why is it I do not

feel grieved ? Is my heart made of stone ? My eyes do not get wet. Are they made of wood ? Not only with these two eyes, but I wish that my whole body were full of eyes so that I could weep with them. I would then be very happy. I wish my heart would melt and become watery so that it could be integrated with you.' That is the purport. But then is that grief real grief ? Some people give vent to their happiness by loudly expressing it when they get a vision of God, and some shed tears of joy. It was the same with Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa. 'Mother, how kind of you ; how merciful ! ' he used to say and weep, and sometimes he used to laugh. Anyway, if we want to know about his real state, we should first know about our own selves," said Bhagavan.

Instead of stopping at that, the young man again asked, " Swami, when he was in an ecstacy of happiness, he did not know the pain of the disease he was suffering from, but when that ecstacy was over he used to realise the pain and groan under it. Does a Realized Soul really know what pain or pleasure is ? "

"I see, that is your doubt. First find out about your own affairs. What does it concern you how a Paramahamsa was ? He need not become a Jnāni only after obtaining your certificate. He has become something. Boyhood has passed with boyhood ; sleeping has gone with sleep. In this wakeful state at least find out what you are ; where you are ; is it Kailāsa * or Bhoolōka or Vaikunta ? * Why not find out all that for yourself and become a Jnāni ? " said Bhagavan. The questioning then stopped.

* Kailasa : The world of Lord Siva.

Bhooloka : Our human world.

Vaikunta : The world of Lord Vishnu.

(33) EDUCATED PEOPLE

4th April, 1948

Yesterday, Sri Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and family came here. Having had Bhagavan's darshan, they went to the great Arunāchalēswara Temple in the town, and, after taking food and rest, came to Bhagavan to take leave of him. Bhagavan graciously nodded his head, giving them leave to go. Having known the ladies of the party, I went to their car to see them off, and then came back to the hall. I sat down and Bhagavan asked if they had gone. I replied in the affirmative. "Ten years ago," said Bhagavan, "they were here; Pranavānanda Swāmi is a first cousin of his."

After a short while, Bhagavan noticed that the European and the Gujarati ladies sitting by me were asking something, and so enquired what they were saying. I said that they were enquiring as to whether Radhakrishnan asked Bhagavan any questions.

"I see," said Bhagavan. "No, they are all well-read people, they know everything. What is there for them to ask?"

An Andhra gentleman : "Did he ask any questions when he came last time?"

Bhagavan : "No. It was the same thing last time too. He had heard everything about me from Pranavānanda Swami, and when he came here he just sat, never even moving his lips."

The devotee : "Outside, he gives lectures in a grand style; why did he sit here without any talk or discussion?"

Bhagavan, with a laugh, said : "In 1938, Rajendra Prasad came here and it was the same thing with him

too. Although he was here for four or five days, he did not ask questions even once. He used to sit quietly in a corner with closed eyes. Only when he was leaving did he want to know what message, if any, I had for the Mahātma. Even that, he induced someone else to ask for him".

The devotee : "It seems that Bhagavan said that the Mahātma was always in communion with the inner Self (*antarātma*), that the inner Self is here, there and everywhere, and that there is nothing that needs to be communicated. Is that so ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes, indeed. Jamnalal Bajaj also came at that time, and it was the same with him too ; he used to sit in a corner quietly, without anyone being aware of where exactly he was sitting. In the early morning, when we were all cutting vegetables, he would join us in the work. It was only at the end that he asked us a few questions and had his doubts cleared".

The Devotee : "In 1944, when Manu Subēdar, the translator of the 'Jnāneswari' into English, came here, he did not ask any questions either, did he ? "

Bhagavan : "No. At that time someone was reading the 'Ribhu Gita' and Manu Subēdar said that, in every book, the Siddha or adept state is elaborately explained but nothing much is said about the sādhaka state, the state of the spiritual practiser. It was then that I showed him the discussion between Vithoba and Jnāneswar in the 'Bhakta Vijayam'. That was all. He asked no more questions. He is a well read man ; what is there for people like him to ask ? They come here for Peace."

The devotee : "Satyamurthi, Thiru V. Kalyana-sundara Mudaliar, Jnāniyar, Bulusu Sambamurthi,

Tanguturi Prakasam, Karapatraswamy and many others, when they came here did not speak at all. Yet all these people, when they go away, deliver lectures, thumping the table and roaring like lions, Bhagavan."

Bhagavan : "Yes, they are learned people. Some are writers, some are orators. Nāyana was also like that".

The devotee : "So people who are well-read do not ask Bhagavan any questions ; it is only ordinary people like us who worry you with them. But if we do not ask you, Bhagavan, how else are we to know ?"

Bhagavan : "That is all right, it doesn't matter." And he was once more silent.

(34) SALUTATIONS

6th April, 1948

At about 3 o'clock this afternoon a young boy four or five years old came with his mother. She prostrated before Bhagavan and sat down. The boy prostrated likewise, but continued the salutations over and over again. Bhagavan laughed at that and told his attendants, "Just see. He is prostrating to me over and over again. Perhaps he thinks that if he does so, he may afterwards do whatever he pleases. He is a young lad. What does he know ? He is just imitating his elders. He must however be rewarded. All that he wants is a plantain. If he gets it he will stop. Give him one, if you have one." On being given one, the boy went and sat down.

After some time, someone came and did *Sāshtāṅga namaskāra* (reverential salutation by prostrating with

all the eight limbs of the body touching the ground), but did not get up for a long time. People nearby finally made him get up and asked him to sit down. He somehow got up but began saluting again and again. He was ultimately prevailed upon to stop saluting and sit down. Bhagavan told the people near him, " *Namaskāra* means prostration a number of times according to some. What can be done ? The real meaning of *namaskāra* is the dissolving of the mind ". " What is the meaning of ' *Sāshtāṅga namaskāra*' , Bhagavan ? " asked the devotee. " It means that eight limbs of the body, namely, two hands, two legs, two arms, chest and forehead, touch the ground while saluting. The idea behind this type of obeisance is that the person doing it says, ' the body which touches the earth, will resolve itself into that earth ultimately, and the ' I ' in me will continue to be ' I ' alone '. That idea must be known to oneself by enquiry. Without knowing it, there is no use in doing these *namaskāras*. With meaningless *namaskāras* people want to secure all the benefits : ' Swami must give them whatever they desire, be it a bag of clothes or money, Swami can give it.' Whenever they do *namaskāra*, I feel afraid. I must be beholden to them. I must act according to their wishes. I must fulfil all their desires. I must conduct myself carefully after knowing their minds. Not only that. Just by bowing to me, they get a sort of right over me. When people like us suffer like this, what about Iswara himself ? He must be beholden to ever so many ; he must act according to the wishes of people ; he must give boons to people. When Swami-hood itself has so many troubles, what about Iswara-hood ? If anyone refrains from prostrating before me, I feel very happy because I need not be beholden to him. A Jnāni need not prostrate before anybody nor need he give his blessings

to anybody. That is because his mind remains always submerged. He is deemed to be doing *namaskāra* at all times. Some people think that when they prostrate before him and he does not respond with another *namaskāra* nor even raise his hand and bless them, they begin to wonder what type of Swami he is. But the fact is, before the others have prostrated, the Jnāni will have already prostrated lower, his mind having been dissolved. Even blessing (*asīrvadam*) is similar. The submerging of the mind itself is a blessing. The Jnāni's mind remains always submerged. That being so, who is the one to do it? What is it that is being done?" said Bhagavan.

(35) WHAT IS DELIVERANCE (MUKTI)?

8th April, 1948

At 3 o'clock this afternoon, an Andhra youth with a sad face approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, I have a request to make, if you will allow me to mention it. I have just come from Bangalore. I do not know how to meditate in order to attain deliverance (*mukti*), and so am worried. You must put me in the way and help me to realise it." "What are you doing now?" asked Bhagavan. "I am doing nothing now, Swami. That is why I am praying to you to tell me how I should meditate," said the young man. "Why do you want to meditate? What is deliverance? What is it you want to realise? Why has this idea come to you at all?" asked Bhagavan.

Poor man; he could not say anything and so was silent. It was however clear from his face that he was worried over something. After waiting for a while,

Bhagavan, with a compassionate look, said, "Keep your mind steadily on your family deity, discard outside thoughts and meditate, or keep the Self itself before your mind and meditate ; if that is done, that which comes from outside will gradually disappear and meditation alone will remain. You need not meditate separately. The meditation on Self will steady itself and will remain constant. What IS, is meditation. There is no such thing as attaining deliverance. Getting rid of extraneous things itself is deliverance. Breath control (*prānayāma*) and other spiritual practices are only for concentrating the mind on one thing. Breath control keeps the wandering mind within the body. That is why breath control has been prescribed first and only then the practising of *japa* (repetition of Divine name), *tapa* (austerities) and the rest. If breath is controlled and kept within for a while, it helps in practising Self-enquiry. If the family deity or some other form is meditated upon, the mind becomes controlled of its own accord. Where that is done repeatedly, that meditation itself leads on to the realization of the Self. You will not then have the duality of the doer and the thing done. All becomes one's natural state (*Swarūpa*) only".

The young man sat like a statue hearing all this. Bhagavan, addressing himself to another devotee by his side, said, "See ! Call HIM Iswara (the Personal God), or Ātma (the Self) or what you will. He is omnipresent and omniscient ; only people cannot see Him. They say that they will do *tapas* and as a result of it, they want Him to come to them suddenly. What can I do ? We are in Him, and we search for Him saying 'Where is He ?' The little ego 'I' wells up and does all this mischief. See its great capacity ! "

(36) NATURE'S SPLENDOUR

11th April, 1948

As summer has advanced and the space in the hall has been found insufficient, Bhagavan has started staying in the Jubilee Hall itself all day. Bamboo screens are usually tied down behind his seat, but the attendants raised them yesterday as they were obstructing the free flow of the breeze. I did not notice it. I went there this morning at 8 o'clock. Bhagavan was seated there on the sofa, facing south, like Dakshināmūrthy. The mango trees behind covered the whole space like a pandal with their branches, their tender leaves and delicate flowers heralding the dawn of summer. Between those leaves and the flower stalks, bunches of little mangoes, looking like Sivalingas, were dangling. The bowers of the flower garden on his right were full of flowers. Pots containing crotons were placed behind him very close to the sofa. On the left, they had filled a cement tub with water, in which sparrows were enjoying a bath. On either side of the sofa, two peacocks were standing — one white and the other coloured. The incense sticks were giving forth their perfumed smoke assailing the nostrils of the devotees gathered there. The sun's rays were coming in through the slits in the covering of the thatched roof and falling on Bhagavan's body, making it shine like gold. Seeing all this splendour, I do not even know if I prostrated as usual before Bhagavan, but I remained standing still, lost in admiration.

Ramachandra Iyer, one of the attendants, looked at me as much as to say, "What is it ?" Unable to contain my joy any longer, I exclaimed, "Brother, have you noticed how beautiful this scene is? See how nature around has blossomed and is showing us all its beauty !

It would be nice if a photo were taken." Bhagavan enquired as to what it was all about. "The whole scene here looks so beautiful that I was suggesting that a photo might be taken," I said. Iyer also fell in with the idea, and so said, "Yes, we will take a photo." Immediately thereafter, Bhagavan began telling us: "As you all know, I was in the Palmyra tree next to Gurumūrtham, for some time. At that time also, I had a small shed under a mango tree. They erected something overhead like a nest to prevent rain falling on me. There was however not enough space even to stretch my legs fully while sleeping. I used to be sitting almost all the time like a bird in its nest. Opposite my shed, Palaniswāmi also had a small shed. In that huge garden, only two of us used to stay."

Quoting, I said, चित्र वटतरोमूले वृद्धाः शिष्याः गुरुयुवाः... It is nice to see the young guru and the old sishyas together under the banyan tree. It used to be like that, I suppose. Did anyone take a photo at that time?"

"No. Where were photos in those days?" said Bhagavan. Addressing his attendant, he said, "See. She says a photo must be taken of this sight." "We shall arrange for it this afternoon," said Ramachandra Iyer. Looking at the trees and recalling past things once again, Bhagavan said, "That mango tree also had small fruit like these trees. They used to fall on top of my shed now and then, creating a sound like 'Tup, tup.' Even though they got ripe, the outer cover was green. After they were sufficiently ripe, they used to be plucked and kept in storage until fully ripe. In the meantime, you know what used to happen! Bats used to come in the nights, nibble at all the ripe mangoes, eat a bit of each and throw it down. The balance fell to our lot. That means

it was a *prasād* (remnants of food presented to a deity) from the bat". When he heard this, Ramachandra Iyer asked, "Did that gardener never give you any fruit?" "He used to tell us to take the fruit from the trees when we felt like it, but we never touched them. We had the bat's *prasād*, you see. When they got fully ripe on the tree itself, they were delicious. Is that not enough? Those thatched sheds and that nature's beauty, gave us immense joy," said Bhagavan.

(37) THE FIRST BATH AND THE FIRST SHAVE

12th April, 1948

After writing to you yesterday afternoon about the grandeur of Bhagavan's surroundings in the Jubilee Hall, I went to the Āśramam a little later than usual. As soon as he saw me, Bhagavan said, "Ramachandra Iyer and Anantanarayana Rao together have just taken a photo".

Being summer and already hot, Krishnaswami sprinkled water on the rush screen at the back of Bhagavan's sofa and also on the crottons which were behind the screen. The spray from the sprinkling fell on Bhagavan and he rubbed his body, saying, "See, they are consecrating (*abishekam*) me!"

That incident seemed to have reminded him of something that had happened in the past, for with smiles all over his face and with appropriate gestures, he told us the following story :

"After I came to this place, Tiruvannamalai, I had no bath for four months. One day, when I was in the compound of the Arunāchala Temple, the wife of a de-

votee by name Ponnuswāmi, came unexpectedly, pulled me along, made me sit, cleaned my head with soap-nut powder and gave me a bath. She had been coming to the temple every now and then ; so I had thought that she had come as usual, but that day, she had come there prepared ! That was my first bath."

" Were you bathing regularly every day afterwards ? " I asked.

" No, there was no question of a bath ; who was to make me bathe ? Who was the one to bathe ? After that, a year or so passed in the same way. I had been in the Gurumurtham cave for some time, you see, and as not many people came there every day, no one bothered me. Even so, a lady, by name Minakshi, who used now and then to bring food to give me, one day brought a large pot and began to boil water. I thought it was for some use for herself, but, taking from a basket some oil, soap-nut, etc., she said, ' Swami, please come '. I did not move. But would she keep quiet ! She pulled me by the arm, made me sit, smeared the oil all over my body and bathed me. The hair on the head which had got matted for want of care, was now spread out and hung down like the mane of a lion. That was my second bath. After that, Palaniswāmi came and everything was adjusted into a routine of daily baths."

" This incident is not found in your biography," I said.

" No, that is so," said Bhagavan, " it was never written then. Shaving was also like that. The shave I had on the day I came here has been recorded ; the second was after a year and a half. The hair had got matted and woven like a basket. Small stones and dust

had settled down in it and the head used to feel heavy. I had also long nails, and a frightful appearance. So people pressed me to have a shave, and I yielded. When my head was shaven clean, I began to wonder whether I had a head or not, it felt so light. I shook my head this way and that to assure myself that it was there. That showed the amount of burden I had been carrying on my head."

"During those one and a half years, did nobody try to get your head shaved ?" asked a devotee.

"Yes, indeed they did try," said Bhagavan, "when I was in the Subramanya temple, one Nilakanta Iyer, the grandfather of a lawyer of the same name now practising, used to come there frequently. One day, he came prepared for the purpose. Thinking that he had come as usual, I kept my eyes closed. Without saying a word to me, he stood some way off opposite me. I heard a 'tip, tup' behind me, so opened my eyes. I saw a barber sharpening his razor. I left the spot immediately without saying a word. Poor man, he realized that I was not willing to be shaved and so had gone off. Ponnuswami's wife alone would not leave me unless and until I took a bath. When she dragged me, pulling me by the arm, what was I to do ?"

"Perhaps she felt you were like a child," I said.

"Yes," said Bhagavan, "and another thing happened when I was living under the madukha tree ; a twenty-year old dancing girl, by name Rathnamma, saw me one day while going to and from the temple to dance. She grew devoted to me and got disgusted with her profession, and told her mother that she would not eat unless she could give food to the Swami. So both of

them brought me food. But I was then in deep meditation and opened neither my eyes nor my mouth, even when they shouted. But they somehow woke me up by asking a passer-by to pull me by the hand ; they then gave me food and left. When Rathnamma insisted that she must daily feed the Swami before she ate, her mother said, ' You are young and so is Swami, and he does not wake until somebody touches and pulls him. We can't do that ; what can we do ? ' Rathnamma then asked a first cousin of hers for assistance, and with his help used to give me food daily. After some time, however, relatives of the boy felt it to be undignified for him and so stopped sending him. She, however, would not give up her resolve to feed me ; so at last the old mother herself came regularly, and being elderly and thinking that therefore there was no harm in it, used to wake me by shaking me and then gave me food. Shortly afterwards, the old mother passed away, and I too did not remain there long. Rathnamma could no longer then go the long distance that she would have had to go to feed me, and so gave up her attempts. Since she could not live unless she earned by her profession, Rathnamma confined herself to one man only ; what does it matter to what community she belonged, she was pure. She had great non-attachment and great devotion. She had never liked her profession and did not want her only daughter to follow it ; so married her off."

The story finished, Bhagavan was once more silent.

(38) UNDIVIDED ATTENTION

14th April, 1948

This afternoon I went to the Āśramam at 2-30. Bhagavan was taking some fruit. On seeing me, Bhagavan's face lit up with a smile. I thought there was some good news for me. After a while, he began saying, "A letter and a photo have been received from South America." In that photo, there are six men and one woman. That woman is seated in the middle with a photo of mine on her head. On either side, two men are seated and four men are standing. It seems that they are members of an association which is known as 'Arunachala Sangam'. In the letter it is written thus : 'Bhagavan, we cannot go over to your presence. We are sending from here only, our reverential salutations to you and are doing spiritual practices (*sādhana*). We want your blessings.' They sent a prepaid envelope also. Where is South America and where are we ?" said Bhagavan.

"Did any of them ever come here ?" I asked.

"They do not seem to have come," Bhagavan replied. "I remember to have seen that lady sometime. How they have heard about me, I do not know. They have written saying that they have read our books and started *sādhana*. South America is the southern end of America. They have respect for me. Why that is so, I cannot say."

"Devotion has no bounds of distance, has it ?" I asked.

"No, that is so. That lady has kept my photo on her head. How could she have known about me ?" said Bhagavan.

"When the sun rises will not the light be seen by the whole world ?" I said.

"That is all right. Seven or eight years back, a lady came from Europe to see me. As soon as she landed, she did not stop anywhere, but came straight here. After sitting in the hall for half an hour, she got up, prostrated before me, took leave, went round the Asramam, and left immediately. She went straight to Colombo and as she got onto the steamer there, wrote me a letter, 'Bhagavan, having heard about you, I had a desire to see you. My desire is fulfilled. I have now no desire to see anyone else in this country. Hence I am taking this steamer.' That was what she wrote. Rather strange," said Bhagavan.

I said to Bhagavan, "With a desire to see the form of the Brahman, and with the help of the divine sight given by Lord Krishna, Dhritarāshtra saw the Brahman and when the form disappeared, he told Krishna, 'After seeing your sacred form, I do not wish to see any other. So please take away the sight you have given me.' Just like that, this lady did not feel like seeing anything else in India after seeing you. For devotion, there is no difference between men and women, is there ?"

"No, there is no difference," said Bhagavan.

(39) THE PATH OF LOVE

26th April, 1948

This morning a Tamil youth approached Bhagavan and asked, "Swami, it is good to love God, is it not ? Then why not follow the path of Love ?"

"Who said you couldn't follow it? You can do so. But when you talk of love, there is duality, is there not—the person who loves and the entity called God who is loved? The individual is not separate from God. Hence love means one has love towards one's own Self. For this, i.e. loving one's own Self, examples have been given in the 'Vāsudēvamananam', stage by stage. Man loves money most; but he loves his son more than money; his own body more than the son; his *indriyas* (the organs of the body) more than the body; the eye most among the organs; life more than the eye; and the Self (*ātma*) more than life. This is exemplified thus: If the son does something untoward and the government decide to punish him for it, the parents offer money and even bribes to set him free. Hence the son is loved more than money. If, however, government do not accept money but say that they will let off the son if the father agrees to undergo the punishment himself instead, then the father will say, 'Do whatever you like with the boy; I have nothing to do with him'. Hence the body is loved more than the son. If a man does something for which the powers that be say that his eyes must be plucked out, he tries to save his eyes by agreeing to bodily torture; so bodily torture is preferred to loss of an organ. If, however, they decide to take his life by beheading him, he would be prepared to lose his eyes or any other organ rather than lose his life; so life (*prana*) is loved more than the organs. In the same manner, a person who desires to have *Ātma-Ānandam* (bliss of the Self) would be prepared to lose his life even, if necessary; so the Self is loved more than life. Hence the idea of a person in loving God is only with a view to being happy himself. He is, however, the embodiment of happiness and that

happiness is God. Who else is to be loved ? Love itself is God," said Bhagavan.

" That is why I am asking you whether God could be worshipped through the path of love ? " said the questioner.

" That is exactly what I have been saying. Love itself is the actual form of God. If by saying, ' I do not love this ; I do not love that ', you reject all things, that which remains is *Swarūpa*, i.e. innate Self. That is pure bliss. Call it pure bliss, God, ātma or what you will. That is devotion ; that is realization and that is everything," said Bhagavan.

" The meaning of what you say now is that we should reject all outside things which are bad, and also all those which are good, and love God alone. Is it possible for anyone to reject everything, saying this is no good, that is no good, unless one experiences them ? " said some other.

" That is true. To reject the bad, you must love the good. In due course that good also will appear to be an obstacle and will be rejected. Hence, you must necessarily first love what is good. That means you must first love and then reject the thing you love. If you thus reject everything, what remains is the Self alone. That is real love. One who knows the secret of that love finds the world itself full of universal love," said Bhagavan and resumed silence.

(40) THE SCREEN

28th April, 1948

Yesterday afternoon, a devotee approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, for one who has realized his Self, it is said that he will not have the three states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep. Is that a fact ? "

Bhagavan said kindly, "What makes you say that they do not have the three states ? In saying that 'I had a dream ; I was in deep sleep ; I am awake', you must admit that you were there in all the three states. That makes it clear that you were there all the time. If you remain as you are now, you are in the wakeful state ; this becomes hidden in the dream state ; and the dream state disappears when you are in deep sleep. You were there then, you are there now, and you are there at all times. The three states come and go, but you are always there. It is like a cinema. The screen is always there ; several types of pictures appear on the screen and disappear. Nothing sticks to the screen ; it remains a screen. Similarly, you remain your own Self in all the three states. If you know that, the three states will not trouble you, just as the pictures which appear on the screen do not stick to it. That means that the three states will not stick to you. On the screen, you sometimes see a huge ocean with endless waves ; that departs. Another time, you see fire spreading all around ; that too disappears. The screen is there on both occasions. Did the screen get wet with the water or did it get burned by the fire ? Nothing affected the screen. In the same way, the things that happen during the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states do not affect you at all ; you remain your own Self."

The questioner : "Does that mean that, although people have all three states, wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, these do not affect the people ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes, that is it. All these states come and go. The Self is not bothered ; it has only one state."

The questioner : "Does that mean that such a person will be in this world merely as a witness ? "

Bhagavan : "That is so ; for this very thing, Vidyāranya, in the tenth chapter of the 'Panchadasi', gives as example the light that is kept on the stage of a theatre. When a drama is being played, the light is there, which illuminates, without any distinction, all the actors, whether they be kings or servants or dancers, and also all the audience. That light will be there before the drama begins, during the performance and also after the performance is over. Similarly, the light within, that is, the Self, gives light to the ego, the intelligence, the Mind and the lower mind (*ahankāra, buddhi, chitta* and *manas*) without itself being subject to processes of growth and decay. Although during deep sleep and the other states, there is no feeling of the ego, that Self remains attributeless, and continues to shine of itself. That is the meaning. There will be no doubts whatsoever if one finds out who one is and what one is by Self-enquiry".

(41) THE DOER AND THE DOING

29th April, 1948

This morning, at about 9 O'clock, a lawyer from Raya-laseema, who came here yesterday, sat near Bhagavan's couch and asked, "Swami, in the Gita, Lord Krishna

first said that everything is embraced in the ‘doing’ only, and one’s self plays no role. Subsequently, He says that He Himself is the ‘doer’, the ‘doing’ and the ‘deed’ (*kartā, karma* and *kāryam*) ; though ‘doing’ (*karma*) is the most important of the three, it is ineffectual by itself (*jadam*). If this is so, then everything depends upon the ‘doer’, who is Iswara. Why when, He first created ‘doing’ (*karma*), did He create different karmas for different people? It is said that afterwards everyone is made to function according to his karma. How did this difference come about in the very beginning? How did it arise? Not only that ; if everything is left to the ‘doing’ and to the ‘doer’ who is Iswara, where does personal effort (*purushakāram*) come in? If there is no personal effort, why is it said that we ourselves, must attain Realization? What does it mean?”

Bhagavan said, “Who is it that is asking? To whom has this doubt arisen? Why has it arisen? First think that over and find out”.

The devotee : “Swami, I am only enquiring why Lord Krishna said that?”

Bhagavan : “That is what I am referring to. What exactly did Lord Krishna tell Arjuna? He told him, ‘The deed will get done according to the ‘doing’. I am the ‘doer’ watching the whole thing from above. Why do you worry? It is your body which does the killing of your relatives. Are you the body? No! Why then this bondage for you? Renounce the idea, he said. This means that he asks Arjuna to do the thing but to give up the feeling that it is he that is doing it. That is personal effort. The feeling that one is, or is not, the body, comes from one’s own ignorance. One only has to give up that feeling; that which one has, one must

oneself reject. Who else can do it ? If by personal effort that bondage is removed, action, under the orders of the 'doer', Iswara, goes on of its own accord. Every one has his work allotted to him and he will do it automatically. Why should one worry ? Arjuna, when he felt that it was not proper to kill his relatives, was only told to give up the feeling that he was the 'doer' ; yet it was Arjuna himself who ultimately fought. By listening to the Gita, he lost the feeling of being the 'doer' and the doubt he had had was no longer there. The work had to be done with that particular body, and it was done. Even Duryōdhana was like that. Not that he was not aware of the correctness or otherwise of what he was doing. He knew that what he was doing was not right, but some force was leading him on to that work. What could he do ? That work had to be done in that way by that body, and it was done. He is reported to have said so at the time of his death. Hence it is clear that some Force is making all people to do things. Getting rid of the feeling that 'I myself am doing' is personal effort (*purushakāram*). All spiritual practices (*sādhanas*) are towards that end."

Another devotee : "That is all right. For this karma there must be a beginning but how it began, no one has mentioned."

Bhagavan : "Yes, but it is the same thing. If you are asked 'how did you get this ?', you say you have got it by 'doing' (*karma*). How were you born ? By 'doing' (*karma*), that is all that could be said. If, however, you ask, how was this karma born, you are told you should not ask such questions. This is known as the Law of the seed and the tree (*bija ankura nyāyam*). The tree is born of the seed ; again from the tree a seed is

born. Where is the origin of that seed ? That is a question which you are told is not to be asked. What can we say to that ? That is why I always ask people to find out first whether they were born."

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृदयेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
आमयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

— Gita, Chapter 18 : 61

(O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings /who are mounted upon the automation of this body, causing them by his illusive power to spin round according to their actions).

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभवेन भारत ।
तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥

— Gita, Chapter 18 : 62

(Seek refuge in Him also, with all your being, O Arjuna ! Through His grace, you shall obtain supreme peace and the eternal abode.)

(42) NAYANA AND THE RAMANA GITA

30th April, 1948.

Yesterday afternoon at 2-30, there was a talk about the stanza 'Hridaya kuhara madhye' and a devotee asked Bhagavan whether it was written while living at the Skandāsram.

Bhagavan : "Yes, it was written while I was there. In 1915 I had to write it on account of Jagadīswara Śāstri."

The Devotee : "Is that the reason ? In the Ramana Gīta it is indicated that Bhagavan himself wrote it."

"No, No," said Bhagavan, "in 1915 Jagadīsa was staying in Skandāsram during Chāturmāsyā¹ and one day he wrote down on a piece of paper '*Hridaya kuhara madhye*', held it in his hand and sat down. When I asked him what it was, he said that he wanted to write a stanza, but when he actually began it, only that much had come to him. And, when I asked him to write the rest, he said he was unable to do so however much he tried. After a time, he went out somewhere, leaving the paper under my seat. Before his return, I completed the stanza, wrote underneath it the word 'Jagadīsa' and showed it to him as soon as he returned. He asked me why I had put his name to it. I said that it was because Jagadīsa had begun it. He said that if that were so, he should have the paper for himself, and took it away from me and carefully kept it with him. He was very young at that time."

"Some time afterwards, I wrote down that same stanza. I was sitting on a big stone slab near the Asramam and all gathered round me and wanted me to tell them the meaning of the stanza. I acquiesced and explained it to them for some two or three hours. Taking advantage of this, Jagadīsa recently wrote a long commentary on it in the same style as had been done on a stanza of Sankara's. The manuscript has apparently been lost somewhere.

¹ The name of a sacrifice performed for four months from the month of Ashadha when a Sanyasin stays in one place engaged in religious practices.

When Nāyana² wrote the Ramana Gita, he took this stanza as the opening stanza for the second chapter. That is the whole story. I have not written anything unless for a good reason."

"Did you write this stanza at about the same time as Nāyana wrote the Ramana Gita?" asked someone.

"No," said Bhagavan, "it was some time later; he wrote in July 1917. But there is an interesting thing about it. In 1913, he asked me some questions and learnt something. When what he had learnt became fully implanted in his mind, he used, whenever he gave a lecture, to recite a stanza extempore and say that it was from chapter so and so, stanza number so and so, in the Ramana Gita. And that was long before he began to write the Ramana Gita. When he bluffed thus, no one dared to call his bluff, for he was a powerful personality, full of resourcefulness. Reciting thus from time to time, he finally wrote the Ramana Gita."

Someone asked, "Had anybody asked where the Ramana Gita was, what would he have done?"

Bhagavan laughed: "Who had the courage to challenge him like that? That was his strong point. Even after writing the Ramana Gita, do you know what he used to do? He used to quote some stanzas which were not in the Gita and cite them as examples. If anyone had the courage to say that they were not in the printed book, he would say that they were in the Mahā Ramana Gita, an enlarged version of the original which he planned to write also, but was finally unable to do

²Kavyakantha Ganapathi Sastri who used to be addressed and referred to as Nāyana.

so. He also used to say that he would write a commentary on the 'Arunachala Pancharatna', and thereby show off all his knowledge, but that neither was ever done."

"It seems that Nāyana once spoke in the same way on the 'Saiva Siddānta'", said another devotee.

"Yes," answered Bhagavan. "That was in the early days of his coming here. At that time, he knew nothing of Saiva Siddhānta. The Association of Saiva Siddhāntis decided to hold their conference in this place and invited Nāyana to preside over it. They also published that he, being a great pandit, would speak at length and authoritatively on Saiva Siddhānta. He was informed of the exact date only four or five days before the conference. On the very morning of the conference he came to me and said, 'These people have asked me to attend Saiva Sabha and speak; but I do not even now know what that Siddhānta is and what really is its nature.' I thereupon took out a Tamil book, the 'Siva Jnāna Bōdha', selected twelve aphorisms from it, explained their purport and then briefly told him the essence of that Siddhānta. That was enough. Being very intelligent he grasped the fundamentals in no time and went to the conference. Able to compose stanzas extempore, he recited them with great confidence and then lectured in Tamil so authoritatively that everyone present was surprised at the profundity of his thought and erudition. When Nāyana returned from the Conference he said, 'It was not out of my knowledge or capacity that I spoke today. It was all due to Bhagavan's grace. The Saiva Siddhānta which I have never read appeared to me as though I had had it in my mind all these years'. Such was his intellectual power."

Said one devotee: "It seem that even for the 'Umāsaḥasram' he did not get ready until the evening before the day fixed for its reading."

Bhagavan replied, "Yes. Invitations had been sent cut to several people saying that the 'Umasahasram' would be read aloud at the Apeetha Temple on a certain day, and many people came even the day before. It was to be read the following morning, and still 300 stanzas had to be written. Nayana came to me and said, 'These 300 stanzas have to be written before daybreak. How can it be done ?' 'Why worry ?' I said. 'It will be all right if we sit up after food.' 'Then you must come there,' he said. All this happened when I was still living on the hill. As desired, I went to the mango cave and lay down in a corner, keeping my eyes open all the time. Nayana sat down opposite me, kept four disciples by his side to write and, giving them extempore, each a part of a stanza, he finished all 300 stanzas by midnight."

The devotee said, "Is it a fact that Bhagavan kept intently looking on until all 300 stanzas were finished, and as soon as they were done, sat up and said, 'Have you taken down all that I said ?'"

Bhagavan nodded: "Yes, it was so. I felt that I had distated all those stanzas."

The devotee further asked, "Is it also a fact that Nayana changed the other stanzas several times but never touch even one of the 300 stanzas ?"

Bhagavan nodded his head in assent and was once more silent.

(43) CONCENTRATION AND DESIRELESSNESS

1st May, 1948

Being busy with some book-binding work, I went to the Asramam a little late this morning. It was somewhere about nine O'clock. By that time, some gentleman from Maharashtra, who came here yesterday appears to have asked some questions. Bhagavan was replying to them with uninterrupted eloquence. The words filled with nectar seemed to be coming out of him like the rapid flow of the waters of the Ganges. A devotee was translating them into English. I felt sorry for having come late. I got into the hall hurriedly and sat down. The question of 'Abhyāsa' (concentration of mind on one subject) and 'Vairāgya' (desirelessness) was being discussed at that time. Bhagavan explained as under :

शनैः शनैः रुपरमेद् बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किंचिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥

— *Gita*, Chap. VI, Sloka 25.

(He should through gradual practice attain tranquillity ; and having established the mind in God through reason controlled by steadfastness, he should not think of anything else.)

यतो यनो निश्चरति मनश्चलामस्थिरम् ।
ततस्तो नियम्येतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

— *Gita*, Chap. VI, Sloka 26.

(Restraining the restless and fidgetty mind from all those objects after which it runs, he should repeatedly concentrate it on God.)

In spite of all this teaching, Arjuna's doubts were not dispelled and so he questioned further :

चंचलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद् वृद्धम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥

— Gita, Chap. VI, Sloka 34.

(For, Krishna, the mind is very unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful ; therefore, I consider it as difficult to control as the wind.)

In reply to this :—

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निर्भुं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृष्णते ॥

— Gita, Chap. VI, Sloka 35.

(The mind is without doubt unsteady and difficult to curb, Arjuna ; but it can be controlled through practice (of meditation) and dispassion, O son of Kunti.)

So said Lord Krishna. Hence it is very necessary that a Sadhak should have practice and desirelessness.

One of the questioners said, “In the second chapter of the Gita it has been stated that practising *Dhyāna* (meditation) along with the path of enquiry is the best but in the twelfth chapter it has been stated that the path of devotion is the best. How to reconcile these two ?” Bhagavan said, “The Sādhak was first asked to practise meditation in the path of Jnana. He could not do so ; next Yoga, then Karma and finally Bhakti. In that way one after another was taught so that a person could follow a path that suits him best. After all, the

goal is one, whatever the path. Lord Krishna's idea was that each path would be easy according to each person's spiritual development."

(44) THE GREATNESS OF MAN

2nd May, 1948

After writing to you the gist of yesterday's discussion about practice of meditation and desirelessness, I wanted to give you the number of the chapter and the number of the Slokas that were quoted but could not locate them easily in the Gita. So I thought the best thing would be to ask Bhagavan himself and so went to the Asramam early in the afternoon by about 2-30. Not many people were there. I gave Bhagavan my copy of the Gita. Bhagavan was not only pleased to point out the Slokas but also once again explained their meaning to me. While doing so some Andhras came there in a group and sat down. One of them asked, "Swami, what is the easiest way to attain Moksha ? "

Bhagavan said with a smile, "That is just what I am explaining now. As and when the mind goes astray, it should be turned inward and made to steady itself in the thought of the Self. That is the only way."

Another said, "To do so, the repeating of the name of Rama is good, is it not ? "

"Certainly ; it is good," said Bhagavan. "What could be better ? The greatness of the Japa (repeating) of the name of Rama is extraordinary," and looking at me, he said, "You know the story of Namadeva. He is reported to have told one Devotee, 'If you want to know

the greatness of the name of Rama you must first know what your own name is, (Own name means one's real nature *Swarūpa*), who you are and how you were born. Unless you know your own origin, you will not know Your Name.' This idea is found in the Abhangas of Namadeva written in Marathi language. Someone wrote *Adhyātma Ramayana* in great detail in the Malayalam language. It is stated in that book that when Anjaneya went in search of Sita, he seated himself opposite to Ravana in the Darbar Hall on a high pedestal and fearlessly spoke to him thus : 'Oh Ravana, I give you a teaching (*Upadesa*) for attaining liberation (*Moksha*). Please listen to me carefully. It is certain that the Self (*Atma*) gets purified by intense devotion to Hari, who is in the lotus of the Heart at all times. The ego gets destroyed and then the sin gets destroyed. Afterwards, in its place, the knowledge of the transcendent Self emerges. With a pure mind and with the Bliss (*Ananda*) generated by a firm knowledge of the Self, the two letters 'Rā' 'Ma' which are like Mantras, will repeat themselves within you automatically. What more is required for a person who has this knowledge, however little it might be ? Hence worship the lotus feet of Vishnu, which will remove all worldly fears, which are dear to all devotees and which shine as brightly as the light of a crore of Suns. Give up the ignorance of your mind.' This has been mentioned in two or three Slokas in the Sanskrit *Adhyātma Ramayanam* but not as elaborately as in the Malayalam text. Is the greatness of the name of Rama ordinary ?

" But one thing. The method of repeating the name (*Japa*) must be known. In the case of all *Japa* it is stated '*Prānāyāme Viniyogaha*' which means that the breath is to be controlled first, and then *Japa* should be

done. In other words the mind must be controlled. Sambanda is a devotee of Siva, you see. So he explained in a verse the way to do the *Japa* of *Panchākshari* (five letters) of Lord Siva's name. Its meaning is that one should close *Navadwāras* (the nine apertures of the human body, i.e. 2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, mouth, anus and the penis), lock them and seal them ; otherwise the mind will run away. After sealing the nine doors, do *Panchākshari Japa* (repeating the five letters). If, by controlling the senses, the mind can be controlled, i.e. submerged, that which remains is the Self. One meditates on one's Self and the *Japa* becomes one's own Self."

"Is that state called 'Ajapā' ?" asked someone else.

Bhagavan : "That which is repeated inwardly is 'Ajapā' but how could the one which is repeated by the mouth be 'Ajapā' ?"

Devotee : "Will it be possible for all people at all times to do *Japā* like that ?"

Bhagavan : "No, it will not be possible. That is why elders have said that you should do *Japā* for some time, sing for a while, read, write and thus turn the mind to good deeds and prevent it from getting into bad habits. The Gita also says that one should stop the mind from wandering by practice and desirelessness. Even *Japā* is like that. The mind should gradually be made single-pointed while performing *Japā*. It is to get that single-pointedness that all the other practices have been prescribed for spiritual practice (*Sadhana*)".

अभ्यास वैराग्याभ्यां तत्त्विरोधः

— Patanjali Yoga Sutras.

(Its (mind's) control by practice and dispassion).

(45) THE MEANING OF DAKSHINAMURTHY

19th May, 1948

Yesterday being Tuesday, I got up very early and went round the Hill. After returning home and finishing my household work, I went to the Asramam at 7-30 A.M. As soon as I got up after prostrating before Bhagavan, he asked me, "Have you come back so soon after *Pradakshinā* ? "

"I returned by 7 O'clock but I was delayed a little at home," I said.

"Is that so ? At what time did you start ?" asked Bhagavan.

"At 3-30 A.M." I said.

"So early ? Who else was with you ?" asked Bhagavan.

"No one. I have been going alone. I do not feel afraid," I said.

"That is all right. What is there to fear ? When we were going around the hill, we were mostly doing it at nights only," said Bhagavan.

A devotee said : "It seems that on one occasion when you all went round the hill, a devotee requested you to explain the meaning of the Dakshinamūrthy Stotra and, when you began explaining it with illustrations, by the time you had completed explaining only one stanza, it was daybreak."

Bhagavan : "Yes, naturally ; there is so much to explain if one wants to. When I was on the hill, Palani-swami asked me and I wrote in verse the meaning of those stanzas. I wanted to write the commentary also but in the meantime the book was sent for printing. Later

on, one devotee sent a man urgently to ask for material for an introduction. And that was the end."

"So that was all we were destined to get," said the devotee.

"Today, while going round the Hill, I noticed in the Arunachala Temple the idol of Dakshinamurthy with the figure of a demon under the feet and wondered why it was so. The same thing I observed in the idol of Dakshinamurthy by the side of the road here and also, in the Amman Temple. What is the significance?" I asked.

"It is said that that figure represents the magically created demon called Moyilakan, that was hurled at Siva by the Tapasvis of the Dāruka forest and that Siva stamped that demon under his feet, killed it and sat on it. After all, Dakshinamurthy is one of the five forms of Siva. To explain esoterically one can say that that demon is *Ahankāra* (egoism) or some such thing," said Bhagavan.

"There being no form (*Rupa*) for egoism, why do they say like that?" I asked.

Bhagavan : "Even Dakshinamurthy does not mean only a form. In the Dakshinamurthy Stotra it is that formlessness that has been described in various ways. They all indicate only formlessness. Just as that formlessness was invented, so also descriptions of form."

Another person took up the conversation and asked, "It is said that Valmiki got his name because he got out of a *valmika* (ant-hill) and that Vyasa got his name because of his arranging (*vyāsa* = Arranger) the Vedas in their present form. What could be the reason for Vasishta being called by that name?"

Bhagavan : "Vasishta means a person who knows what is best (Visishta)."

Devotee : "What is the meaning of the words 'Paśyan Sarvam Tavākrititayā Satatam' which occur towards the end of the fifth Sloka of Arunachala Pancha Ratnam ? "

Bhagavan : "That means 'seeing everything as a form of yours '".

Devotee : "I am not able to understand that yet. May I request you to let me have the meaning of the whole Sloka ? "

Bhagavan : "All right. Now listen. 'Tvayyarpita Manasā' means with the mind surrendered to you. 'Paśyan Sarvam Tavākrititayā Satatam' = seeing everything as your form at all times ; 'Tvām' = yourself ; 'Bhajate Na Anya Preetyā' = worships you with whole-hearted devotion ; 'Saha' = he ; 'Jayatyarunāchala tvayi Sukhe Magnah' = gets lost in Thy bliss, Oh, Arunachala ! and thus succeeds in his efforts. That is the full meaning of the Sloka. When the mind gets merged in the Self, everything is the form of the Self. As, at all places, his own Self is all-pervading, he worships his own Self."

Hereunder is given the full Sloka :

त्वयार्पित मनसा त्वां पश्यान् सर्वं तवाकृतितया सततम् ।

भजतेऽनन्यं प्रीत्या स जयत्यरुणाचलं त्वयि सुखे मग्नः ॥

(He who dedicates his mind to Thee and, seeing Thee, always beholds the Universe as Thy figure, he who at all times glorifies Thee and loves Thee as none other than the Self, he is the master without rival, being one with Thee, Oh Arunachala ! and lost in Thy bliss.) — Arunachala Pancharatna, V-5.

(46) SERVICE

5th June, 1948

On 1st June 1948 which was the day of the Maha Puja in the Mother's temple, I went to the Asramam at 2 O'clock in the afternoon. Bhagavan had just returned from the cow-shed and was settling down on the sofa. Not many people were there. I offered my humble salutations and sat down. Venkataratnam came there. On seeing him Bhagavan began laughing and, looking at me, said, "Do you know what he has done this afternoon ? He has done a great meritorious service to the Swami — unparalleled service ! "

It is about a week now since Venkataratnam was deputed to work in place of Rajagopalan, to look after the library and also to do personal service to Bhagavan. I thought he might have done something wrong and so said anxiously, "Why ? What has he done ? " "Why do you ask me what he has done ? Ask him yourself," said Bhagavan. When I looked at Venkataratnam I found him silent and with his head bent down. After a while Bhagavan himself related the incident thus :

"This afternoon, after food, when I got up to go towards the cow-shed, there were several people near the office barring the way and so my attendants tried to make way for me. Not liking those people to be disturbed, I decided to go to the hill by the side of the dispensary and so began walking that way. The place was filled with used leaf-platters. I wanted somehow to walk along stepping in between the leaves but this chap Venkataratnam came there hurriedly and began pulling away those platters and throwing them to one side. With that, even the little clean space that had been available

in between the platters became polluted and dirty. How then was I to walk ? Should I carefully see which place is clean and then step on or wait until the whole place is washed and cleaned ? But would it be possible to clean the whole place then and there ? See the dear little boy's smartness and intelligence ! ”

I too laughed and asked Bhagavan how exactly he managed ultimately.

Bhagavan : “ I had to go, and so on I went. What else could I do ? But it did not stop there. While he was putting the platters from one side, Subramaniam began pulling from the other side all the platters near the steps on the hill side. He is more intelligent than this chap ! Will they stop doing all that by mere words ? No, their one idea was to remove immediately the polluted platters being in Bhagavan’s path but never for a moment imagining that, by so dragging the platters away, the whole space would become polluted. This is how they do service. I walked all the way over that polluted ground and had to wash my feet and my walking stick later before I could enter the hall. It does not matter at all if it is not deemed to be pollution ; but then these people have done all this knowing that there was pollution and mainly with a view just to remedy it.”

“ That is so. Westerners may not take it as pollution but these people do ; but it did not occur to them at that time,” I said.

Bhagavan thereupon observed : “ Yes, that is so. Once a European came here and ate his food with all the others. After that, he cleaned his hands with his handkerchief, put it into his pocket and sat there until I got up. In those days all people used to remove their used leaves themselves and throw them away outside and so,

as all the leaves were removed by that time, the whole place was polluted. As soon as I finished eating and got up he too got up and walked along stepping on the polluted places. People there began protesting but what would he know about the pollution ? True. He could not understand them but I told him about it in English. What of that ? To understand our objection he should know that the places from where the leaves were removed were being looked upon by us polluted. Not knowing that, he went on stepping on those places. Afterwards I told our people that he was not aware at all of the fact that we look upon the places as polluted and it was therefore not a fault on his part. Really, in their country there is no such practice. So they did not know it to be a pollution. It is all right when you do not know. It is a fault only if you know that it is wrong. Did these two people today do this without knowing it to be a fault? They knew, but they did it out of devotion to Bhagavan. This is service indeed ! " said Bhagavan and laughed.

"Who could really do service to Bhagavan ? It is enough if one does not do any disservice," I said.

Then Bhagavan observed : "That does not matter. I will tell you the real thing. They disturb people near the office who are conversing among themselves, standing or comfortably seated, saying, 'Bhagavan is coming, give way, get up.' When I could easily go by another way, why trouble them all ? Is that the way to do service to Bhagavan ? We must just get our work done somehow. Is it possible to keep everything clean ? Everyone acts like this in one thing or another. They say, 'Bhagavan wants this, wants that,' and thereby create trouble and inconvenience to all others. What does Bhagavan want ? Giving trouble to others is all that Bhagavan wants, is it ?

This is all done in my name. To add to this, they say, ' We are doing everything to please Bhagavan ; we are serving him '. Oh ! what attention and what service ! "

(47) EMBODIMENT OF COMPASSION

15th June, 1948

With the onset of the summer season, Bhagavan has been staying all the time in the Jubilee Hall only. At mid-day, when it is hot, the attendants shift the sofa to the north where there is a bower with crotons on either side and sprinkle water on khus-khus tatties that are tied around. This afternoon I happened to go there at about 2 O'clock. Bhagavan was seated with a matty cloth covered over his body and his head. There was no one there except Krishnaswami. He was standing behind Bhagavan with a rose-water sprinkler in his hand, which appeared to be full of rose-water. He opened the screw cap. From that sprinkler the rose-water was being sprayed on to Bhagavan like a light shower of rain. Bhagavan was rubbing his body with evident satisfaction. When he saw me coming, he said, "Look ! They are doing *Abhishekam* to me (sprinkling holy water)." So saying he covered his face with that matty cloth and said, "They have covered me with this wet cloth. They have tied tatties all round and are sprinkling water thereon. This place is now cool like Ootacamund".

I went a little closer to the sofa and found it was cool. "Coming from the hot atmosphere outside, this seems very cool," I said, and came back to sit in my usual place. After thinking for a while, Bhagavan in a reminiscent mood began to talk :

"When I was in the Virupaksha Cave, we used to change over to Mango Cave during summer as there was no water in the former. At the Mango Cave, at mid-day, some women of the lowest caste used to come there for water with heavy loads of grass on their heads and very tired. Poor people, they start early in the morning after taking a little gruel (*kanji*), go up the hill and secure a head load of grass. As soon as they come to the cave they used to throw down their bundles, bend down and say, 'Swami, Swami, first throw a vesselful of water down our spines.' I used to stand on the verandah there and when I threw water on them as desired, they used to recover from their exhaustion, saying, 'Oh, how good this is!' Then, making a cup of both the hands they used to drink water until their stomachs were full, wash their faces, take some rest in the shade of the trees and then depart. They alone could experience the happiness of it all. It is only when one experiences the oppressiveness of the heat that one knows the relief of the coolness of water."

"Is it Bhagavan himself who poured the water?" I asked.

"Yes," said Bhagavan. "I myself knew they would be coming at that hour and so I would wait there with the water ready. What could they do? They should not touch the water in the Molai Pal Thirtham (holy tank) and there is no water anywhere else. The heat is unbearable. They cannot have gruel unless they sell the grass and get some money. They are mothers. They must reach home quick to look after the children. What can they do, poor people! They used to come to the cave with the hope that the Swami would supply water. We were not cooking at that time. If any day we did cook,

we poured a lot of water into the rice when cooking, took out the gruel, poured it into a pot, mixed water with it liberally, and added salt. If dry ginger were available I would mix it in also. By the time they came, the gruel water would be quite cool. When a tumblerful of it was poured into their hands, they used to drink it like nectar and go away. The taste of that gruel and the happiness of drinking that water they alone could know." Filled with emotion, he assumed silence, as he could not speak any more.

I was also unable to speak for some time and so sat still looking at that embodiment of compassion. After a while I said, "This incident is not mentioned in Bhagavan's biography. Why ? ". "No, it is not there. I did not think it worth mentioning," said Bhagavan. "How many more incidents like this must have occurred and left unrecorded !" I said. Bhagavan merely nodded his head, and was silent.

(48) THE DELIVERANCE OF LAKSHMI, THE COW

20th July, 1948

In my letter to you under the caption "Worship of the Cow" (in Part I of these letters), I described to you the grandeur of Lakshmi, the queen of the cows, and the amount of regard Bhagavan had for her. To that queen, as for his own mother, Bhagavan on Friday the 18th instant gave *Videha Mukti* (deliverance from the body). That morning when I went to the Asramam, I was told that Lakshmi would not survive the day. So I went straight to the cow shed, without seeing Bhagavan even.

The room built for the calves was vacated, cleaned and Lakshmi was given a bed of straw to lie down on. As it was Friday, she was as usual decorated with turmeric paste, vermillion mark on the forehead and a garland of flowers round the neck and horns. Venkataratnam was sitting by the side fanning her. Lakshmi was lying down with her majestic look spreading lustre all round. She reminded me of Kamadhenu going to Kailas to do *Abhishekam* with milk over the great Lord Siva.

When I went to Bhagavan and prostrated before him and got up, he looked at me with a divine look. Taking it as an order, I said I would go and stay with Lakshmi. He nodded his head in assent and I went immediately. Venkataratnam gave me the fan and left. Sitting in that place I began repeating *Ramana Dwādasāksharī* (twelve letters), *Ashtothram* (108 names) etc. and Lakshmi appeared to hear them carefully.

When Bhagavan came to the cow-shed at 9-45 A.M. as usual, he came to Lakshmi. Bhagavan sat on the hay by her side, lifted her head with both his hands, and passing one of his hand lightly over her face and throat, and then placing his left hand on the head, began pressing with the right hand fingers her throat right down to the heart. After pressing like that for about a quarter of an hour he said, addressing Lakshmi, "What do you say, mother ? Do you want me to stay here alone ? I could stay, but what to do ? All people could be round you as in the case of my mother. Even so, why ? Shall I go ?" Lakshmi remained calm, devoid of all the bonds of this world and pains of her body as though she were in Samadhi. Bhagavan sat there unable to move and with a heart full of compassion. I was overwhelmed at the sight and exclaimed involuntarily, "Oh ! Mother Ala-

gamma had the greatest luck. So has Lakshmi now." Bhagavan looked at me with a smile. Subramaniam came and said, "It seems the doctor will not be coming till 10-30 as there is no immediate danger to Lakshmi." "All right. So Doctor will not be coming now. Have you brought the medicine for injection ?" asked Bhagavan. Turning towards Lakshmi and gently stroking her head and neck, he said, "What do you say ? May I go ?" Subbulakshmi said, "She will feel happy if Bhagavan is by her side." "That is so, but what to do ?" So saying and looking into the eyes of Lakshmi, Bhagavan said, "What ? May I go ? Won't you tell me ?" Lakshmi looked at him proudly. What reply Bhagavan got, we do not know but he got up and went away saying, "See that the flies do not get into the mouth." I assured him that we would take due care of Lakshmi and Bhagavan left the place very reluctantly.

With the divine touch of Bhagavan, the outer breath of Lakshmi began subsiding and the movement of the body began to decrease. When the doctor came at 10-30 and gave an injection Lakshmi remained unaffected as if the body was not hers. There was no death agony. Her sight was calm and clear. The doctor turned her over into the posture of Nandi, put some medicine on the boils and went away instructing us to keep some support for the head. As it was 11-30 by then, Venkataratnam came back after having his meal. He asked me to hold up the head saying he would bring some more hay. The tongue touched me and it was icy cold ; the life of Lakshmi reached the feet of Sri Ramana and was absorbed.

Ten minutes later, Bhagavan came into the shed saying, "Is it all over ?" and squatted by her side, took her face in both his hands as though she were a little

child, and lifted it and said, "Oh Lakshmi, Lakshmi," and then, to us, controlling his tears, he said, "Because of her, our family(i.e. Asramam) has grown to this extent." When all were praising Lakshmi, Bhagavan asked, "I suppose the doctor has not troubled her much, did he ? How did her life cease ?" We told him all that had happened. "That is all right. Did you notice this ? The right ear is uppermost now. Till yesterday she was lying down on her other side. Because of the boil she was turned over to this side. So this ear had to come up. Look, in the case of people who die in Kasi, people say Lord Siva will whisper into the right ear. Lakshmi too has her right ear up," said Bhagavan, and showed that ear to all people there. By that time, crowds gathered. After a quarter of an hour, Bhagavan got up and said, "Ramakrishna has been saying for the last ten days that a good tomb (*samadhi*) must be built for Lakshmi." Bhagavan then went away to the hall.

(49) BURIAL OF LAKSHMI, THE COW

20th July, 1948

Thinking of Lakshmi all the time, we had our usual meal and some rest. When at 2-30 p.m. I went to the cow-shed Bhagavan was already there. We went and saw the body of Lakshmi. The face did not show any sign of death. We came back to the hall and sat down. Till evening Bhagavan was telling us stories about Lakshmi and was giving instructions to the people concerned about the arrangements for the burial. "It was the same thing in the case of Mother. Until the pouring of the holy water over the body (*Abhishekam*) was done, the lustre

of the face did not fade. Unexpectedly several things had been received by the time of the burial. The body could hardly be seen from under the camphor that was thrown upon it by people from time to time. There were pipes and bhajan all round. We brought the body down at night and kept it under the pipal tree with the intention of burying it somewhere near the Pali Tank before day-break. There was, however, some delay in bringing bricks, slaked lime and constructing the tomb. Meanwhile many people gathered round and put up a big show. On the tenth day, even shops were newly opened. Just see what all will happen now." Always hearing and feeling that Bhagavan was giving undue importance to Lakshmi's burial, one of the devotees, Govindarajula Subbarao, said, "We see many instances here of animals getting deliverance more often than human beings. Bhagavan has told us several times that they come here to work out the balance of their Karma. As we go on observing, it would seem as though they are better looked after by Bhagavan than we ourselves."

Bhagavan remarked : "Will it be possible to say so in all instances ? Is anybody making all these arrangements deliberately ? And do we have the money for all that ? When the time comes people spontaneously take up the work and all the required articles come in. The work is done in a trice. Sadasiva Iyer came here the day before yesterday as though he had come specially for this purpose. He knows the full details of erecting a tomb. He is there now on the spot, giving all the directions. He says he will go away tomorrow. It is one's individual luck ; what can we do ? Were it an ordinary animal, the butcher would drag it away. For this (Lakshmi) the tomb is going to be erected on a scale equal to that of a Mahatma. Look at this white peacock ; how many pea-

cocks have come and gone ? They are different from this one. This goes about meekly and mixes freely with all people. Where is Baroda and where is Arunachala ? It was born there and has come here. Who wanted it ? " said Bhagavan.

Towards the hill side and near the dispensary, the tombs of a deer, a crow and a dog were erected long ago. Now a pit was dug near them and the work for the construction of the tomb was begun.

All was ready by 6 p.m. People had come in large crowds. Some of them even sat on the compound wall. The Sarvadhisthikari brought the body of Lakshmi in a wooden cart. Bhagavan came and sat on a chair. Lakshmi's body was placed opposite to him. Devotees brought water in pots and poured it over the body of Lakshmi. After that, Abhishekam was done with milk, curds, ghee, sugar and rose water. Incense was burnt, a silk cloth was covered over the body, the face was smeared with turmeric powder and vermillion and the body was covered with flower garlands. Sugar candy was offered and *Arati* (waving of lights) was performed. Lakshmi's face beamed with beauty and charm when she was thus decorated.

By about 7 p.m. devotees lowered the body of Lakshmi into the grave with cries of "Hara Hara Mahadev". Bhagavan was visibly affected. After Bhagavan had touched the holy leaves, they were thrown on to Lakshmi by the Sarvadhisthikari. After that, devotees sprinkled turmeric and vermillion powder, camphor, holy ashes, sandal paste, flowers and salt, and finally, earth was thrown in to fill the grave. After the burial was over, Bhagavan came back to the hall. The *prasād* was then distributed. The whole thing ended like a marriage

festival. Lakshmi the cow is no longer in the cow-shed. She has been freed from the bonds of the body and now, merged in the lustrous Atman of Sri Ramana, is all-pervading and shining, in her own Self.

That night, in the early morning hours, Bhagavan wrote a final epitaph in Tamil on Lakshmi. At our request he wrote it in Telugu and Malayalam also. Hereunder is the Telugu verse :

VENPA :

*Sri Sarvadhari Samvatsara Jyeshtakhya
Masasita Dvadasim Bhargava Vasaramu
Taraka Visakha sahi Tammavu Lakshmigati
Cheru Dinamani Cheppu.*

(It is hereby recorded that Lakshmi the cow was liberated under the star Visākhā, on Friday the twelfth day of the bright half of Jyeshta, in the year Sarvadhāri.)

(50) THE PREVIOUS HISTORY OF LAKSHMI — THE COW

24th July, 1948

At 4 O'clock yesterday afternoon, a Tamil youth came into the hall. On seeing him, a devotee said that the youth was the grandson of the man who had presented Lakshmi the cow to the Asramam. "I see," said Bhagavan. "Does he know that Lakshmi passed away?" That youth said, "I have just heard it, Swami. When I went to the cow-shed to see Lakshmi I was informed of it. I have come here after seeing the tomb."

On enquiry, the youth said, "I belong to a village called Kannamangalam. It is about 40 miles from here. My grandfather Arunachalam Pillai wanted to present a good milch cow to Bhagavan and so, in 1926, he brought Lakshmi here along with her mother. Lakshmi was then barely six months old. I also came along with them. I was quite young then. From that time onwards I always look up Lakshmi whenever I come to this place on business. I have now heard this sad news." After he left, Bhagavan told us the following story :

"You know what happened when they came here with the cow and the calf. 'Why all this for us ?' I asked. Arunachalam Pillai replied saying, 'I have for a long time been thinking of presenting Bhagavan with a cow. I am now in a position to do so. I have brought it after a good deal of trouble on boat and rail. Please keep it, Swami.' I said : 'You have done your duty in presenting it to us. Who is there to look after it ? Please keep it with you on our behalf.' The owner of the cow replied, 'I will not take it away even if you cut my throat.'

"Hearing this Ramanatha Brahmachari was piqued and said with great zest that he himself would look after the cow. 'All right. Hang it round your neck !' I said. As the calf came to us on a Friday, we named her Lakshmi. Ramanatha somehow tended the cow and the calf for two or three months. Lakshmi was very playful, jumping about as she pleased and, while so doing, she ruined all the vegetable plants we were growing. If anyone chided her, she used to come to me for protection. I used to tell the Asramites that if they so desired, they could put up a fence to protect their plants. Poor chap ! Ramanatha could not put up with all these troubles from

the other inmates of the Asramam and so he handed over the cow and the calf to a keeper of cattle in the town with some stipulations. I do not remember his name."

A devotee said, "His name is Pasupati. He is a Kannadagi. Lakshmi's mother passed away after a short time. The arrangement was that if Lakshmi gave birth to a male calf, it should be given to the Asramam and if it were a female calf he should retain it."

Bhagavan said, "That might be so. About a year after that, he came here with Lakshmi and her calf for a bath on an eclipse day. He saw me first, had a bath in the Pali Tank along with the cow and its calf and then they went home together. At that time Lakshmi saw the whole of this Asramam. Remembering the route carefully she began coming here everyday. She used to come in the morning and go away in the evening. She used to lie down by the side of my couch. She insisted that I myself should give her fruit. She would not take any other than the hill plantain."

Someone said, "Before leaving every evening she used to go round the hall, it seems ? "

Bhagavan replied, "That is the thing. We had no bell in the dining hall then. We do not know how she did it but everyday exactly at the appointed time for meals she used to come and stand before me. We used to look at the clock and find that that was just the time for meals. Her coming was the signal for us. She used to return to town daily most reluctantly."

On further enquiry, I came to know that Lakshmi came away permanently to the Asramam in 1930, that she had three calves by then — all males — and that, as per agreement, all the calves had been given to the Asramam.

When she was pregnant for the third time, one evening she was unwilling to leave Bhagavan and go home — like Nandini of Vasishta — she was shedding tears and lay close to the couch. Bhagavan was visibly affected and softly passing his hand on her face said : "What ! You say you can't go away, and want to stay here alone ? What am I to do ?" and, looking at the others, said, "Look, Lakshmi is weeping, saying she cannot go away. She is pregnant and may have confinement any moment. She must go a long distance and again come here in the morning. She cannot refrain from coming here. What is she to do ?" At last Bhagavan somehow coaxed her and sent her away. That very night she delivered. About the same time Pasupati had some domestic difficulties. Unable to bear the burden of this Lakshmi with all her vagaries, he brought her and her three calves and presented them to Bhagavan. Lakshmi lay at Bhagavan's feet and would not rise. Placing his right hand on her head and pressing it, he asked if she would like to stay here permanently ; she closed her eyes and lay still like one in a trance. Noticing that, Bhagavan pointed out to the others that she appeared as though her responsibility for her calves were over for they had been placed in Bhagavan's charge.

When I narrated this story to Bhagavan he agreed. "Yes," he said. "That was so. After Mother came to stay with me, regular cooking and meals started, and after Lakshmi came, cattle and dairying became established. Subsequently for three or four years Lakshmi was presenting us with a calf every year on the Jayanthi day. Afterwards, that practice stopped. Altogether she had nine deliveries. After Lakshmi came here to stay, cows from different places were brought by devotees and left here. So the cattle shed grew in size. In the beginning

they were tied up here and there under a thatched shed. When Salem Sundaram Chetty (Judge) came here, he decided to construct a *Gośālā* (cow-shed) and fixed an auspicious time for the laying of the foundation stone. Half-an-hour before the appointed time, when everything was being got ready, Lakshmi 'broke loose from her tether and came to me running as though to tell me that a house was being constructed for her and that I should be there. When I got up, she led me on to the spot. She did the same for her house-warming ceremony also. Somehow she used to understand everything. Very smart indeed ! "

(51) A POOR OLD WOMAN

25th July, 1948

At 3 o'clock this afternoon, conversation in Bhagavan's presence again turned up on Lakshmi. A devotee said, "It seems Arunachalam Pillai purchased Lakshmi, not at Kannamangalam but at Gudiyatham." Hearing that Bhagavan said, "This was also Keerapatti's * town." That devotee asked, "When exactly did she come to this place ?" With a smile Bhagavan began telling us her history :

"I myself do not know. Even when I was in Arunachaleswara Temple she was staying on the hill and was visiting me now and then. But it was only after I went to the Virupaksha cave she began coming to me frequently. She was then living in the Guha

* A poor old woman, living by selling in the vegetable market green leaves collected from the hill.

Namasivaya Mandap. At that time that Mandap was not as well maintained as at present. It had only a wooden door and wooden latch. She had no other articles than an earthen pot. She used first to prepare hot water in it to bathe and then cook vegetables and food in it. She had only one pot for preparing whatever she wanted. She used to go out before sunrise, wander about the hill and bring back some special leaves useful for cooking as vegetables. She used to cook them tastefully, bring me about a handful and persuade me to eat. She never failed to do so even once. Sometimes I used to help her in cooking by going to her place and cutting the vegetables. She had great confidence in me. She used to go to town daily, obtain rice, flour, dhal and the like by begging at various houses and store them in a big open-mouthed earthen jar. Once in a way she used to prepare gruel with that flour and dhal and bring it with the vegetable curry, saying, 'Sami, Sami, yesterday one good lady gave me a little flour. I have made some gruel, Sami.' She believed that I knew nothing. When she was not there, I used to open the doors of that Mandap and find several varieties of foodstuffs in the jar. But then she had absolute confidence in me. She did not allow anyone else into that Mandap. When she could not find any vegetables she used to sit there depressed. On such occasions I used to climb the tamarind tree, pluck some tender leaves and give them to her. She was thus somehow supplying me food every day. She never used to take anything herself. She used to bring all sorts of curries, saying, 'Sami likes that.' She had great devotion and attention. Even at eighty years of age she used to wander about all over the hill. She was living there on the hill even before I went there."

"Was she not afraid of anything ?' I asked.

Bhagavan said, "No. What had she to be afraid of ? You know what happened one day ? For some reason or other I went to the Skandasramam and stayed there for the night. Palaniswami was, however, in the Virupaksha cave. At midnight a thief got into her place and, when he was meddling with things, she cried out, 'Who is that ?' The thief put his hand over her mouth but she somehow managed to shout at the top of her voice, 'Oh, Annamalai ! Thief ! Thief !' Her cries could be heard even at Skandasramam where I was. I shouted back saying, 'Here I am ! I am coming. Who is that ?' So saying I ran down in hot haste. On the way, at the virupaksha cave, I asked Palaniswami about it and he said, 'I heard some shouting from the cave of the old woman but I thought she was mumbling something.' Some people were living at Mango Cave and the Jataswami Cave but no one appears to have heard her cries.

"The cries were heard by the one that had to hear them and Arunachala himself responded to her call," I said. Nodding his head in assent, Bhagavan said, "Hearing my shouting, the thief ran away. We both went to her, asked her where the thief was and said it was a bogey, and I laughed. She said, 'No Sami. When he was removing things I challenged him and so he put his hands over my mouth to prevent me from shouting. I then shouted at the top of my voice. It was perhaps you that said you were coming. He heard that and ran away.' There was no light there and so we lighted a piece of firewood and searched the whole place when we found the jar and around it several small bundles scattered about ; we then realised that it was a fact."

I said, "Her belief in God was profound. Hers is not an ordinary birth, but a birth with a purpose." Bhagavan merely nodded his head and was silent.

When Gajendra sent out his appeal to Lord Vishnu the latter heard it in Vaikunta and immediately rushed to relieve the distress of Gajendra without telling Lakshmi and without wearing his arms, viz. Conch and the Disc. In the same manner Bhagavan ran to the rescue of his devotee. See the solicitude towards devotees !

(52) FAITH

27th July, 1948

This morning at 8 o'clock one of the ardent devotees brought the Tamil note book written by Bhagavan and gave it to him. Bhagavan showed the verses he required, turned over some of the pages, showed some more verses and was explaining their meaning. I could not hear him and so looked at him with some concern. Noticing it Bhagavan spoke loudly, "Some time ago, Muruganar wrote two verses in Tamil in praise of Vishnu. One is a *Kāiyikam* (pertaining to the body) and the other is a *Vāchikam* (pertaining to the word of mouth) and the gist of those verses is :

- ‘1. Swami, you took the *Varāha Avatār* (The Boar Incarnation), lifted the earth which was submerged in water and saved the people. How could I, one of the inhabitants of the earth, praise you suitably for the great good you have done me ?

' 2. The World was one great ocean (Ekarnavam) when the Devatas prayed to you to save them. You then took the shape of a Hamsa (swan) and when with both wings fanned the water, the water gave way and the earth came out of it. For what you have done for us, how can I sufficiently praise you ? '

" This is the purport.

" After writing those two verses he insisted on my writing the third one *Mānasikam* (pertaining to the mind). So I could not help writing it. It was only then that I wrote the verse the purport of which is :

' O Swami, to relieve the burden of the earth, you took the Avatar of Krishna and by your teaching through the Gita like " whenever there is decline of righteousness ", " for the protection of the virtuous " * you assured us that you would have several other incarnations. To praise such a Lord and his various forms, who am I ? '

These words of praise or ' Who am I ? ' have several meanings and could be interpreted in different ways by different people. I wrote this verse on Vishnu mainly on Muruganar's insistence. He wrote *Kāyikam* and *Vāchikam* and said that Bhagavan alone should write the *Mānasikam*. What could I do ? "

I said, " Who else could possibly write the *Mānasikam* ? "

Looking at a gentleman sitting opposite, Bhagavan said, " Look, that Krishnaswami Iyer wrote a commentary on Bhagavad Gita, attached a picture of Krishna

* *Gita*, IV, 7 & 8.

on the front page of the Manuscript and pressed me to write something underneath. Then I wrote the verse '*Pārthan Thērināl*' (in Tamil) and then changed it into a Sloka in Sanskrit reading :

पार्थं सारथि रूपेण श्रावयित्वा शुभां गिरम् ।
पार्थस्यार्थं हरोदेवः कृपामूर्तिं स्स पातु नः ॥

(As the Charioteer of Pā尔tha (Arjuna) the Lord gave him the divine Teaching ; may He, who is compassion incarnate and who resolved the distress of Arjuna, protect us !)

"It is found in 'Bhagavad Gita Ratnamālikā'. These are the only two I have written in praise of Vishnu and I had to write them under the above circumstances."

(53) APPROPRIATE TEACHING

29th July, 1948

As Bhagavan was going out this morning at a quarter to ten, his body faltered a little. The attendants hesitated to touch him to enable him to steady himself as they knew he would not like it. An old devotee who was walking by his side at the time tried to hold him up. Warning him against that, Bhagavan coolly said, "You all try to hold me from falling down but actually throw me down. Enough of it. Please take care that you don't fall down yourself." These words are pregnant with great meaning. Though it would appear that Bhagavan was saying something

commonplace, there was a great truth in those words and I therefore made a note of them then and there.

In the meantime, Bhagavan returned and sat down in his usual place. Even before that, a young man had come there in a huff into the Hall. After some attempts he said, "Swami, I have got a question in my mind. Can you tell what that question is ? Or do you want me to ask it ?" Bhagavan said, "Oho ! That is what is the matter, is it ? Sorry. I do not have such powers. Being a capable person you may be able to read other's thoughts. How can I get such powers ?" That young man was about to say, "What is then your greatness if you cannot do that much ?" but others who were there prevented him from saying that. Seeing that, I came and sat nearer Bhagavan. Looking at me Bhagavan said, "Look. This young man asks me whether I can know what question he has in his mind ! No one has asked such a thing so far. So it means that he is testing me. The purpose of a person in coming here is known even as he comes in. The manner in which he sits itself reveals the purpose of his visit. Instead of trying to test me, why does not he test himself and find out who he is ? Would that not be much better ? "

A gentleman, who happened to be sitting by the side of the young man, took up the thread of the conversation and said, "Swami, You say that finding out the self is the greatest thing in life. But for finding It out, is the *Nāma Japa* (repeating the name of the Lord) good ? Can we attain *Moksha* in that way ?" Bhagavan said, "Yes, it is good. That itself will take you in due course to the Goal. The repeating of the Name is to remove all extraneous things. Then everything extraneous disappears and what remains is the

Name alone. That which remains is the Self or God or the Supreme Being. *Nāma Japa* means we give a name to God and call HIM by that name. You give Him that name which you like most."

That devotee asked, "Will Iswara manifest Himself if you give him some name and pray to Him to appear in a particular form?" .

Bhagavan :. "Yes. He will answer your call by whatever name you call Him and will appear in whatever form you worship Him. As soon as He manifests Himself you ask something ; he grants the boon and disappears but you remain where you were."

I said, "I suppose Bhagavan also will do likewise, if we ask him for some material benefits." Without taking any heed of what I had said, and by way of avoiding the question, Bhagavan said, "That is why God is afraid of manifesting Himself. If He comes, the devotees will ask Him to give away all His powers and retire. Not only will they say, 'Give everything to us', but they will also say, 'Do not give them to anyone else.' That is the fear. That is why God delays in coming to His devotees."

Another devotee : "Is it the same thing with Mahatmas ? "

Bhagavan : "There is no doubt about it. If any lenience is shown, they begin to exercise authority on Mahatmas. They will say, 'You should do as you are asked to.' They will also say, 'No one else should come here.' And so on".

Devotee : "It is said that the Mahatma looks upon all with the same kindness. Why then do they tenderly receive some, reply to some and not to others, when

asked, shout at some and show indifference towards others ? ”

Bhagavan : “ Yes. All the children are the same for the father. He wishes them all well. Hence he treats them with love and anger according to their propensities, and thus gives them training. Children who are gentle, remain aloof with fear and do not ask for anything ; they should be cajoled with love and tenderness and given whatever they want. Those who are bold, ask for and take whatever they want. Those who are vagrant should be reprimanded and kept in their proper places. Those who are stupid should be neglected and left to fend for themselves. In the same manner Mahatmas have to be loving or harsh according to the merits of the devotees.”

(54) LOVE OF ANIMALS

26th August, 1948

At 3 o'clock this afternoon while we were discussing something in Bhagavan's presence, a stranger came here with a platter full of fruits. It seems that on the way some bold monkey came, snatched some of the fruits and escaped. Hearing the noise outside and realising what had happened, Bhagavan laughingly said that the monkey took away its portion of the fruit as it was afraid we would not otherwise give it. We all laughed.

While this was going on, a female monkey with a babe at her breast approached the fruit basket. People near the basket shouted it away. Bhagavan said, “ It is

a mother with a child. Why not give her something and send her away ? ” But he was not sufficiently audible, and so the monkey got frightened, went off and hid herself in a tree. Bhagavan, full of pity and kindness, said, “ Is this fair ? We call ourselves Sanyasins ; but when a real Sanyasi comes we drive him away without giving him anything. How unfair ! We want to eat for years and live. We store things in a room, lock it and keep the keys with us. Has the monkey got a house ? Can it put anything by for the morrow ? It eats whatever it can get and sleeps on whatever tree available. It carries the child under its belly, wherever it goes, until the child is able to walk about when it leaves the child to itself. Who is a real Sanyasi, the monkey or ourselves ? That is why, the male monkey took its share on the way itself. That was a male and could do it with impunity. This is a female. What can she do ? ” So saying Bhagavan began calling that monkey cajolingly. The monkey came on to the side of the couch and stood there in an endearing manner. Bhagavan gave her all the fruit she wanted and sent her away.

A little later, the white peacock came in all its grandeur. Bhagavan, looking at it, said to me, “ Look, their ears are not visible. In the usual place for ears there are big holes. They are covered by feathers in the shape of a fan.” I said, “ Is that so ? I never knew it before.” Bhagavan then remarked, “ I observed this while I was on the hill. We then had two peacocks with us. The pea-hen always used to sleep in my lap. I observed this when she was thus sleeping. The peacock never came so close to me. He used to wander about in all sorts of places. She never used to leave me but always sit by my side or sleep in my lap. She was very familiar with me. The peacock used to call her to accompany him

whenever he went out, but like a little child, she would never leave me and go."

I said, "Little girls are always more attached to Bhagavan and Bhagavan also shows towards them greater affection."

Bhagavan : "One day a fellow took her away by force. She never returned. What happened I do not know. The cock however at last breathed his last in my lap. It was then we built a tomb for him there."

"How very fortunate it must be!" I said. "Yes, yes." said Bhagavan and was again silent.

(55) WHAT IS HAPPINESS ?

10th September, 1948

For some time past, the Ashram doctor has been suggesting that Bhagavan should take wheat diet instead of rice as that would give better nutrition and, four or five days back, he emphatically stated that the change over to wheat diet should be effected without further delay. The Ashram authorities came to Bhagavan and asked for permission to prepare *puris* (wheat cakes fried in ghee). Bhagavan objected to it saying that the *puris* would require a lot of ghee and it was not necessary to spend so much money on them. They said that there was no need to worry about the expenses and, as the doctor says it would do good for Bhagavan's health, *puris* would be prepared. Bhagavan said, "Please don't do anything of the sort. If this doctor says wheat is good, another doctor will say that wheat is no good for Bhagavan's health. He also is a great doctor. Should we not

obtain his permission also? Are we independent in such matters? First ask the doctor."

On enquiry as to who that doctor was and what really happened, it was found that he was no other than our Subramania Mudaliar, the store-keeper. It seems some time back wheat had been given as a part of the rations of foodgrains. As no one was accustomed to wheat it was difficult to dispose of it separately. Hence wheat and rice were cooked daily and served in equal proportion to all the people in the Ashram. Bhagavan, however, insisted on being served with wheat only and was eating it daily. That devotee, the store-keeper, knowing that wheat would unduly generate heat in Bhagavan's body and upset his health, requested Bhagavan not to take wheat, but to no purpose. Hence he stopped serving wheat food in the dining hall and had it served to the coolies only.

When the doctors questioned him on this matter and challenged his statement that wheat does not suit Bhagavan's health, he tried to evade giving a straight answer by saying that, on that occasion the wheat obtained on the ration card was worm-eaten and if that fact were known to Bhagavan he would insist on eating that food himself and so he had no alternative but to have it served only to the coolies. Bhagavan came to know of that after he returned from the cow-shed and, with some bitterness, said, "Oh! Is that so? What a great service he has done! We should eat all the good food and the food that is prepared from damaged wheat should be given to the poor coolies! I suppose they think Bhagavan will be pleased when he is informed about it. So a great deed has been done and all this because of their devotion to Bhagavan. What greater shame could there be if food that is not fit for us is

given to the coolies in our own presence ? That is how every one here behaves. Enough of all this nonsense. I do not want puris or anything of the kind. Give them to the coolies. If they eat them is it not the same as my eating them ? ”

Taking up the thread of the conversation, another devotee said, “Our only anxiety is that Bhagavan’s body should be healthy.”

Bhagavan : “ Yes, that is true. But what is health and what is happiness ? Does happiness consist in eating only ? Take the case of a Maharaja. Everyday he has rich and delicious food cooked for him. But he is always sick ; always suffers from indigestion. He has no taste for food. He cannot digest what he eats and suffers from stomach-ache. He can’t sleep, even though he has a fine cot, nice silk curtains and soft cushioned bedding. What is the use ? He is always worried about one thing or another. A coolie is happier than that king. He eats or drinks whatever he can afford to and sleeps soundly without any worries. As he works with the sweat of his brow he gets first class appetite. With that appetite he relishes food like nectar even if he takes only gruel. He has nothing to lay by for the morrow and so he has no worries. He lies down comfortably under some tree or other and enjoys sound sleep.” That devotee said, “ But then he does not think that he is a happy man.”

Bhagavan : “ That is the trouble with the world. The one who sleeps under the tree, looks at the palaces and mansions and regrets that he does not have those pleasures. But he is the really happy man. Once I saw a coolie here. Till noon he was doing hard labour

by digging the earth and throwing it on the road. He was sweating profusely all the time and was tired. He became hungry. He washed his legs, hands and face in the tank, sat on a slab and opened the pot containing his food. It was full of cooked rice, with a little soup sprinkled on it. He took out three handfuls of that rice and swallowed it with evident relish. Nothing was left over. He washed the pot, drank some water and dozed away under the tree, with one of his arms serving as a pillow. I then felt that he was really a happy person. What did he eat to enjoy that great happiness? If one eats just to live, everything gives strength. It is only when you live to eat that you become sick."

Devotee : "What Bhagavan said is true, but a Maharaja regrets that he has not become an Emperor; an Emperor that he has not become a Devendra (the Lord of the Gods), and they will not have the feeling that a coolie is happier. Is it not?"

Bhagavan : "No. They will not have that feeling; that is the illusion. If they have the true feeling, they become realised souls. As I have experienced both of them, I know the value of that happiness. To tell you the truth, the happiness I experienced while in the Virupaksha cave when I ate only if somebody brought something for me and slept on the earthen platform without even a cloth on it, I do not have it now with this luxurious food I now eat. This cot, this bed, and these pillows — all these are bondages."

(56) WHERE IS THE SWAMI ?

11th September, 1948

The day after Bhagavan told us that he does not now have that happiness which he enjoyed when he was sleeping on an earthen platform, some devotees went to Skandasramam after obtaining Bhagavan's permission and, on their way back, saw the Virupaksha cave. On returning to the Asramam they asked Bhagavan if the earthen platform referred to yesterday was the same as that now in the verandah there, and whether it was a fact that Bhagavan himself constructed that platform.

Bhagavan : "Yes, that is a fact. We all thought that it would be convenient for visitors to sit on. So I built it with stones and mud. It was only some time later that it was cemented".

I said : "Is it a fact that while the platform was being constructed some stranger came and enquired of Bhagavan where the Swami was and Bhagavan sent him away saying that the Swami had gone somewhere ? "

Bhagavan said, "How did you come to know of that ?" and laughed. I replied that Echamma had told me about it. Thereupon Bhagavan related the incident to us :

"Yes. It is a fact. One morning I arranged the stones, prepared the mud and was building the platform. Some stranger came there and asked me 'Where is the Swami ?' There was no one else besides myself. So I said, 'Swami has just gone out somewhere.' He again asked, 'When will he return ?' I said, 'I don't know.' As he was afraid it might be a long time for the Swami

to return, he descended the hill when he met Echamma coming up, who asked him why he was going down. When he mentioned what had happened, she asked him to accompany her saying she would show him the Swami. Echamma came up, put down inside the cave the vessel containing the food she had brought with her, prostrated before me, rose and told the stranger, 'There he is. He is the Swami.' The man was surprised and, after prostrating before me, said to her, 'Is he the Swami ?' When I came here a little while ago, he was building the platform. Not knowing who he was, I asked him 'Where is the Swami ?' and he said 'The Swami has gone out somewhere.' I believed him and so started going back.' Echamma thereupon began scolding me for misleading him. Then I said, 'Oho ! Then do you want me to tie a board round my neck saying 'I am the Swami ?'"

Devotee : "It seems you misled people in the same way even after coming here ?"

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is true. We did not have so many buildings then. We had only this hall where all are now sitting. Even this was originally constructed as a kitchen with a chimney. Gopala Pillay the father of our Shanmugam Pillay and several other devotees insisted on having a hall for Bhagavan to sit in, and said that the construction of a kitchen could wait. The chimney that had already been constructed was therefore dismantled and the building was converted into this hall. Between this hall and Mother's temple there used to be a thatched shed for a kitchen and by its side near the black neem tree there used to be the store room. That also was a thatched shed. Daily, we used to get up early in the morning and cut vegetables. One day

while I was thus cutting vegetables keeping the door of the store room open, and all the others had gone out on different errands, two or three people who were going round the hill came into the hall and, finding the couch empty, came round to the store room. They were people who frequently visited the Asramam. What has that got to do with it ? My head was wholly covered with a bed-sheet and as I was cutting vegetables, my face was not visible. 'Sir, Swami is not on the couch. Where is he ?' they asked me. I replied saying that he had just gone out and would be back in a little while. They thereupon went away without waiting as it would be too late for them to go round the hill. Some one here noticed that and asked me why I had misled them. 'What else to do ?' I said. 'Was I to tell them that I was the Swami ?' Such incidents happened quite a number of times."

When I mentioned all this to a devotee, who has been in the Asramam from very early days, he said, "Not only that. You know there used to be a swami by name, Dandapani. He was a well-built person, with a big paunch and with an ochre-coloured loin cloth. He had a stout body and a stentorian voice. Bhagavan therefore used to say that it would be a good thing to keep him at the doorway during the Krithikai Festival of Lights so that people who came in crowds could take him to be the Swami, prostrate before him and go without troubling Bhagavan. Bhagavan has thus always been anxious to avoid publicity."

(57) ASTROLOGY

20th September, 1948

A few days ago an astrologer came here. At about 10 a.m., the day after his arrival, he asked Bhagavan several questions on astrology and obtained suitable replies. I give below a brief report of their conversation :

Questioner : "Swami ! According to the astrological science, predictions are made about coming events taking into account the influence of the stars. Is that true ? "

Bhagavan : "So long as you have the feeling of egoism all that is true. When that egoism gets destroyed all that is untrue."

Questioner : Does it mean that astrology won't be true in the case of those whose egoism is destroyed ? "

Bhagavan : "Who is there to say it won't be true ? There will be seeing only if there is one who sees. In the case of those whose egoism is destroyed, even if they appear to see they do not really see. The window is open. Even so there must be some one to see. Does the window see anything ? "

Questioner : "If that ego were not there how could the body continue to function from day to day ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is it. The body is a house for us. This house will be properly maintained only if you are in it. Hence we must realise that we are keeping the house habitable only so long as we are in it and must never give up the knowledge that the house is separate from the Self. The moment that is forgotten

the feeling of ego comes in and troubles begin. Everything in the world thus appears real and the destruction of that feeling is the destruction of the EGO. When that ego is destroyed nothing (of this world) is real. What is to happen will happen ; and what is not to happen will not happen."

Questioner : "You say that what is to happen will happen and what is not to happen will not happen ; if that is so, why should it be said that good deeds must be done ? "

Bhagavan : "If something good is done, it results in happiness. Hence people say good deeds must be done."

Questioner : "Yes. That is why elders say that sorrow is adventitious."

Bhagavan : "That is so. Sorrow is adventitious. It is only happiness that is true. Every living being desires happiness because his natural state is the embodiment of happiness. All *sādhanas* (spiritual efforts) are for overcoming adventitious sorrow ; when a headache comes on casually, you have to get rid of it by medicine. If it is a permanent ailment of the body attached to it from birth to death, why should you try to get rid of it ? Just as boils and other diseases of the body are cured by a doctor's treatment, sorrows which are the result of various difficulties can be overcome by *sādhana* specially aimed at them. This body itself is a disease. The root cause of it is ignorance. If for that ignorance the medicine called Jnana is administered all inherent diseases will disappear at once."

Questioner : "Is it possible to get immediate results by *sādhana* ? "

Bhagavan : Some yield immediate results and some do not. That depends upon the intensity or otherwise of the *sādhana*. If good acts or evil acts are done with great intensity the results will manifest themselves immediately ; otherwise the results are slow. The results, however, are inevitable."

(58) LIFE ON THE HILL

30th September, 1948

Recently Bhagavan himself changed and wrote Tamil verses of Atmabodha in the *Kalivenpa* metre. As it has now been printed in a book form, that has since been the topic of frequent discussions in Bhagavan's presence. Yesterday afternoon, Bhagavan himself said addressing a devotee sitting nearby : "Look. When we were in the Virupaksha cave I wrote in this small note book in the Malayalam script at the request of Palaniswami a good portion of Sankara's stanzas and *Upadesas*. This Atma-bodha also is found in that notebook ; but at that time I did not feel like writing a commentary thereon. Off and on, the stanzas used to come to my mind. You know what happened once. We all started for the summit of the Arunachala hill, with all necessary things for cooking our food and eating it whenever and wherever convenient. That was when we were in the Virupaksha cave. Palaniswamy stayed behind in charge of the cave. By the time we reached the Edudonalu (Seven Ponds) it was rather hot. So, we bathed and then wanted to cook our food. We took out the cooking vessels and all the foodstuffs such as dhall, salt and ghee and also arranged the fireplace and then we found that we had not brought

the most important thing of all, namely the match-box. Each person began offering advice as to what to do, but in vain. The cave was too far away to go and fetch a match-box. Moreover it was very hot and everyone was terribly hungry. Some tried to make a fire by striking one piece of flint against another but without success. Some tried to rub one piece of wood against another as they do in Yagnas for lighting the sacrificial fire but that too was not successful. The second stanza in Atmabodha came to my mind, namely,

बोधोऽन्य साधनेभ्यो साक्षात्मोक्षैक साधनम् ।
पाकस्य वानिहवत् ज्ञानं विना मोक्षो न सिध्यति ॥

“I read it out, explained the meaning and kept them all in good humour.”

Another devotee said, “We do not know the meaning of that Sloka.”

Bhagavan replied with a smile, “You want to know its meaning ? It means that just as you cannot cook whatever articles you may have unless you have fire, so also you cannot attain liberation unless you have knowledge.”

“What happened afterwards ?” asked someone.

Bhagavan said, “Some one appears to have sent word through one of the grass-cutters who were returning home with head-loads of grass. Palaniswami sent a match-box through some one of those going up the hill for wood-cutting. Subsequently we lit a fire, cooked and ate. You know how the cooking was done ? Rice,

dhall and vegetables were all put together and boiled and then some salt was added and a *kitchadi* (hotch-potch) was made. All of us had decided on it beforehand. After food, we took a little rest and then started for the summit. To enable them to understand the stanza '*Bodhonya Sādhanebhyo*' I continued to explain its full significance to them during our walk. On reaching the summit, I said to them, 'You see the amount of trouble experienced in reaching here. We climbed to a little extent and then had to mix a lot of things and eat before we could climb further. For preparing the food we had no fire, and so nothing could be done. Similarly, you may have everything for teaching and learning but without understanding there cannot be full ripening of wisdom. With that fire of *Jnana* all worldly things must be mixed up and swallowed to attain the highest state.' After that we came back straight to the cave before it was dark. In those days we never felt it difficult or tiresome to go to the summit, so we used to go whenever we felt like it. When I think of it nowadays, I begin to wonder whether I ever went to the summit."

"Is it a fact that Echamma and others also used to accompany you ?" I asked. "Yes. Even the old woman, Mudaliar Pātti, used to come with us. Both of them used to bring food everyday without fail. They would not listen to me. Even if I went away somewhere just to avoid them, they used to find me out somehow," said Bhagavan. I remarked, "We complain of pain in the legs for several days if we go up to Skandasramam even once. It is remarkable how these old women managed to go up to Skandasramam everyday with a bundle on their head ; and sometimes elsewhere also, wherever Bhagavan happened to be. Their great desire to fall at the feet of Bhagavan perhaps gave them the required

strength." With a nod of approval and a smile, Bhagavan was silent.

(59) PLAYING WITH CHILDREN

10th October, 1948.

A few days ago, Mahadeva Sastri, son of Kavyakanta Ganapathi Sastri, came here. Bhagavan introduced him to us all. As he is now living in this place our talk turned on his father Sri Kavyakanta yesterday afternoon. Bhagavan began telling us :

"When I was living in Virupaksha cave, sometime in 1903, Nāyana* came there with his family. At that time this Mahadeva was about four or five years of age. Nāyana prostrated before me and then asked the little boy to do likewise. He appeared not to have heard it and, with an air of indifference, kept quiet. Nāyana too did not mind it. Then, all of a sudden, that boy prostrated before me in full length (*Sāshtāṅga* — with his eight limbs touching the ground). Like a young boy who has had his Thread Ceremony he placed his hands on his ears and then touched my feet. I wondered how that little boy could have known the correct procedure of prostration and felt that it must have come from family traditions."

I said, "Yes. Every habit must come out from family traditions."

Bhagavan : "That is so. This Mahadeva has since changed a lot; I used to talk with him frequently.

* Sri Kavyakanta was always addressed as 'Nāyana' which means 'father' in Telugu.

During the days when I was living in the Mango cave, Nāyana invited all those near and dear to him, to listen to his reading of "The Uma Sahasram" in Pachiamman Shrine. His family also came. Mahadeva was then eight years of age. I asked him if he remembered me. He did not say anything in reply and quietly went away to play. After a while, somebody came to see me. They prostrated before me and telling me that they had come once before, asked me if I remembered them. As I did not remember, I was silent. I do not know how he noticed that incident, but after they left, Mahadeva came to me running and said, "Swami, what did those people ask you first ?" I replied saying that they had enquired of me if I remembered them as they had come once before and that I had been silent as I did not remember them. He promptly stated that he likewise did not remember me. I felt amused. You know what I did one day ? Seating Mahadeva on my back I began swimming in the tank opposite the Pachiamman Shrine from one end to the other. When we were half-way through he began pressing me down, greatly elated, shouting 'Aha, Hai !' as cart drivers do to their bullocks. I was tired and it seemed as though both of us would be drowned. I was of course very anxious that he should be saved from such a catastrophe. So I managed somehow to reach the other side."

I said, "For one who helps people to swim across the mighty ocean of *Samsāra* (the material world) is that difficult ?"

Another devotee enquired if it were a fact that Bhagavan and Nāyana used to swim in the Pandava Tank.

Bhagavan replied, "Yes. That also was only in those days. We used to try to excel each other in swimming. That was great fun."

Another devotee said, "It seems you played marbles with children ?"

Bhagavan replied, "Yes. That was so. That too was while we were in the Virupaksha cave. The holes dug for the purpose of playing marbles must be there even now. Those children sometimes used to bring packets of sweetmeat. We all shared them. During Deepavali they used to put aside my share of crackers and bring them up to me. We used to fire the crackers together. It was most entertaining."

I was reminded of the *Leelas* (playful acts) of Lord Krishna's boyhood days. Even now Bhagavan plays with children if they come here with toys.

स तत्वज्ञो बालोन्मत्त पिशाचवत् ।

जड वृत्या लेकमाचरेत् ॥

— *Mahāvākyaratnamāla.*

(The Knower of Truth should go about the world, (outwardly) stupid like a child, a madman or a devil.)

(60) SADHU SANGAM

20th October, 1948

At 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon an elderly lady came to Bhagavan along with her children, grand-sons, grand-daughters and others. On seeing them, Bhagavan

said with a smile, "Oh Kanthi ! Is that you ? I thought it was somebody else." She went to Bhagavan with some familiarity, showed him all her progeny, prostrated before him and came back to sit with the ladies. Looking at me Bhagavan asked, "Do you know who she is ?" On my replying in the negative, he told us :

"There is in the town a gentleman called Seshachala Iyer. She is his daughter. This lady, Echamma's niece, Chellamma, Rameswara Iyer's daughter, Rajamma and some others are all of about the same age. They were all quite young when I was on the hill. They used to climb up the hill and come to me very often. Sometimes they used even to bring their dolls and perform the dolls' marriages. At other times they used to bring rice, dhall etc., cook and eat and give me also something from their preparations."

"I take it, Bhagavan used to play with them ?" I said. "Yes. They used to come up whenever they felt like it. They were all very young, you see, and so they were independent. Now she has a big family and so she cannot come whenever she wants to. As it is a long time since she came last, I was wondering who it was," said Bhagavan. "Not only did you play marbles with the little boys but you played *Gaccha Kāyalu* (children's game) with the little girls. They were all born lucky," I said. Nodding his head in affirmation, Bhagavan related an incident that had occurred at that time.

"It was in those days that Chellamma came to me with a paper in her hand. When I looked at it out of curiosity, I found written on it the following Sloka :

सज्जन सङ्गे संप्रात्पे समस्तनियमैरलम् ।
तालवृन्तेन किं कार्यं लब्धेमलयमारुते ॥

(If association with sages is obtained, to what purpose are the various methods of self-discipline ? Tell me, of what use is a fan when the cool, gentle south wind is blowing ?)

“I translated it into Tamil in verse form beginning with ‘*Sādhu Sangathāl*’. Subsequently it was included in the supplement to the “Forty Verses” (verse 3). You have it in prose, have you not ? ” asked Bhagavan, and I replied in the affirmative.

I asked, “How did Chellamma get that paper and why did she bring it to you ? ” Bhagavan replied, “Echamma used to fast every now and then, saying it was Ekādasi or it was Krithikai and the like. Chellamma too started to fast with Echamma. But then Chellamma was very young and used to suffer a lot in consequence. Echamma usually sent food for me through her. On a Krithikai day she brought me food even though she was fasting that day. How could I eat when she was not taking any food ? I told her that she should not indulge in such fasts being young, and somehow prevailed upon her to eat. Next day while she was coming up the hill with food she found that paper. It appeared to contain some Sloka and so she brought it here to show it to me. When I saw that, I found it contained this Sloka. I said, ‘Look. It contains the same thing I told you about yesterday.’ She asked me what its meaning was and so, I translated it into a verse in Tamil and explained the meaning to her. Thereafter she gave up her fasts. She had great faith in me. Even after she attained age she

never would write anything on paper without the words 'Sri Ramana' to begin with. Those children used to recite before me all the songs and verses they learnt. When Chellamma passed away all of them felt as if they lost their own sister." said Bhagavan.

One devotee said, "It is stated in the Biography that when the news of her death was announced, Bhagavan was visibly moved and expressed sorrow. Is that a fact ?" Bhagavan said that it was a fact and was silent. You know, Bhagavan has said several times that a Jnani weeps with those who weep and laughs with those who laugh.

(61) BHIKSHA IN AGRAHĀRAM

20th November, 1948

From 2-30 p.m. this afternoon Bhagavan was telling us about the happenings of the early days of his coming to Tiruvannamalai. It was 3 o'clock. Gambhiram Kuppanna Sastri brought a marriage invitation card, gave it to Bhagavan and prostrated before him. After talking to him for a while about the marriage Bhagavan looked at us and said, "It seems the grand-daughter of Gambhiram Seshayya is going to be married. This is the invitation card." "Is that so ?" I said. With a smile Bhagavan enquired, "Do you know why these people get their surname as Gambhiram ?" "I do not know," I said:

Bhagavan : "These people belong to the family of Akkanna and Madanna. Gambhiram is the title given to his ministers, Akkanna and Madanna, by the Golkonda

Ruler. That has become their surname now. You know there is the tomb of Bhagavataswami in Cuddalore: That Bhagavataswami belonged to this family."

Questioner : " Is that so ? Then was that Bhagavataswami a Brahmin ? "

Bhagavan : " Yes. He was a Brahmin. When he was lying somewhere near Cuddalore unmindful of his body, the maternal grandfather of Somasundaram Pillai who happened to be in Cuddalore brought him home and kept him until he breathed his last. Kuppanna and the rest of his family were with that Swami all the time. It is only after that Swami passed away that they came here to be with me. I suppose you know that he is Gambhiram Seshayya's elder brother's son ? "

Questioner : " That I know. But they are Andhras, and how did they come to style themselves Iyers ? "

Bhagavan : " That is because they have been staying in this part of the country for a very long time ; may be for some generations. When I was in Gurumurtham, Krishna Iyer the brother of Sesha Iyer was working here as Salt Inspector. After I left Gurumurtham, I stayed for some time in the Arunagirinātha Temple opposite to the Ayyankulam tank. During that period, I went one night to the Agraharam for alms and I called at Krishna Iyer's house. He was playing cards at the time seated on a mat with three others and before a candle light. When I clapped my hands (as is usually done by Bhagavan to draw the attention of the householders) they were startled. Krishna Iyer felt ashamed, hurriedly removed all the paraphernalia of the cards, mixed some rice and gave me alms. At that time I did not know who they were. After

Seshayya came here, he told me that Krishna Iyer was his brother. It seems his brother felt highly repentant for sitting there playing cards when the Swami came and thereafter completely stopped card playing."

Questioner : "So, does that mean that staying here, Bhagavan used to go out to collect alms personally ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. I used to go out every night. I went to Arunagirinātha temple in the month of August or September 1898. As soon as I went there to stay, I told Palaniswami that I would go my way and he should go his and sent him away. But although he came back the same evening, I myself went out for alms. At times I used to go even during daytime. At night people used to wait for me outside, with lanterns, to give me alms. Seshayya's brother also used to wait similarly for my arrival. I was there for about a month only. As it was near the Agraaharam the crowds began to grow. With a view to avoiding all the rows incidental to crowds, I went up the hill to stay. In those days, going out for alms used to be an exhilarating experience. I used to accept two or three handfuls of food at each place and eat. By the time I had thus eaten at three or four houses my belly would be full and I used to return back home."

Questioner : "Perhaps the other householders used to feel disappointed at your not visiting their houses."

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is so. That is why the next day I used to go to the other side of the Agraaharam. I do not think on my visits I left out even one house in that Agraaharam."

Questioner : "How blessed those householders must be ! "

(62) THE LOTUS FEET OF THE MASTER

4th November, 1948

I do not know if you have noticed that there is a big light-red mole on the sole of Bhagavan's right foot. I too did not notice it for a long time. Only the other day I saw it. As you are aware, during the winter months, a charcoal stove is lighted and kept near Bhagavan to warm his hands and feet. I feared therefore that the stove had been kept too near, resulting in the sole of the foot getting burnt, and so asked Bhagavan anxiously. Bhagavan replied : "Oh ! It is nothing. It has been there since my childhood." I did not attach much importance to it at the time. Yesterday, however, during some conversation, I broached the subject with Aunt Alamelu (Bhagavan's sister). She said, "I was also once perturbed on seeing it and asked Bhagavan. He laughed and told me that it had been there even at birth. He also stated that it was by that mark of identification that his uncle had recognised him after he had run away from home."

You know, we used to read in fairy tales (Kasi Majli Stories) that great personages have a pearl in their navel and a lotus flower on their instep. I went to sleep thinking of that mole, and the foot of Bhagavan appeared in my dream. With that thought in mind I went to the Asramam early this morning, by half-past seven. By that time Bhagavan had returned from the bath room by the side of the cow-shed and had sat down on the couch. After all the others had prostrated before him, I too prostrated and got up, and standing, continued to stare at his foot. Noticing this, Bhagavan looked at me enquir-

ingly. "Nothing," I said, "I am looking at that foot which has all the characteristics of a great personage (*Mahāpurusha*)." "Is that all?" said Bhagavan with a smile and was about to open the newspaper to read it when I said, "It seems that when Auntie enquired about that mole, you stated that it was by that sign you were recognised by your uncle when you ran away from home."

"Putting the paper down and sitting cross-legged in Padmasana pose, Bhagavan replied, "Yes. It is stated in the 'Ramana Leela', as you know, when my younger uncle, Subba Iyer, passed away, my other uncle Nelliappa Iyer, while he was in Madurai, came to know through Annamalai Thampuran that I was here. However much Thampuran told him, Nelliappa Iyer was not sure about my identity. So when he came here he could recognise me only by that mole."

"How anxious he must have felt!" I said.

Bhagavan then remarked, "How could he not be anxious? He used to look after us with great care after we had lost our father. I came away like this and so he was always fearful for my safety. In the meantime Subba Iyer also passed away and so the burden of looking after Subba Iyer's family also fell on him. It was then that he heard that I was here. He came here running, with great concern. Subba Iyer had great courage and pride, but this man was very meek and mild. If it had been Subba Iyer, he would never have gone back home leaving me here. He would have bundled me up and carried me away. As I am destined to stay here, my whereabouts were not known so long as he was alive. It was known only a month after he passed away. Nelliappa Iyer, being spiritually minded and mild in his ways,

left me here saying, 'Why trouble him ?'" So saying, Bhagavan became silent.

"It seems that the watchman of the garden, Rama Naicker did not allow him even to enter the garden?" I enquired.

Bhagavan : "No. He was not allowed. That is why he wrote a chit and sent it inside. For writing the chit, however, he had neither pen nor pencil. What could he do, poor man ! He took out a neem twig, sharpened the end to a point, plucked a ripe prickly pear from its stalk, cut it open, dipped the twig into the red juice of the pear, and with it wrote the chit and sent it on to me. He finally came in and realised that there was no chance of my accompanying him. Subsequently, he saw in a neighbour's garden a learned man giving a discourse on some book to a small gathering and so went to enquire about me. In the view of that learned man I was an ignorant person knowing nothing, and he said, 'That boy is sitting there without any education and with a crude philosophy'. My uncle was naturally worried because I was young ; had not learnt anything from anyone and might turn out to be a good-for-nothing fellow. So he told that gentleman, 'Please keep an eye on my nephew and teach him something, if possible', and went away. For a long time, he (that learned man) held the view that I knew nothing, and tried once or twice to teach me 'something, but I never cared. Later on, when I was giving a discourse on the 'Gita Saram' in the ~~Sesanya~~ Mutt, he came there. He then discussed with me various matters and when he heard my explanations and expositions of the Gita, he said, 'Oho ! You are such a great man ! I thought you were illiterate.' So saying, he suddenly prostrated before me and went away. Nelliappa Iyer,

however, continued to feel sad for a long time for my supposed ignorance and lack of education."

On my enquiring whether he ever came back, Bhagavan said, "Yes. He came back twice when I was in the Virupaksha cave. On the first occasion, I never spoke anything. Though I was speaking to someone before he came, when I learnt he was coming I kept silent as I did not like to say anything before an elder such as he. But you know what happened when he came another time ? I did not know beforehand about his coming. Some people wanted me to explain to them the meaning of Dakshinamurthy Stotra, while I was in the Virupaksha cave, and so I began explaining. Daily I used to sit facing the door ; that day I sat with my back to it. Hence I did not know of his arrival. He came in quietly and sat outside listening to me. We came up to the Sloka 'Nānā Chidra'. After I gave out its meaning and began my commentary thereon, he suddenly came inside and sat down. What could I do ? I felt unconcerned and gave my commentary without any hesitation. After hearing it all, he felt that his nephew was not an ordinary person, that he knew the subject very well and hence there was no need to worry any further. He went away fully satisfied. Till then he was always anxious about me. That was his last visit. He never came again. He passed away a few days later." Bhagavan's voice quivered, as he said that.

"This incident has not been mentioned in the Biography. Why is it ?" I asked. Bhagavan replied saying, "It ought to be there. But they never asked me and I never told them."

(63) PACHIAMMA — DURGA

22nd December, 1948

Today is Tuesday, you see. Hence I obtained Bhagavan's permission yesterday evening itself and started for going round the hill (*Giri Pradakshina*) early morning at 3-30. By the time I reached Pachiamma Shrine, the sun had just risen. As the day was not yet advanced, I thought of going from there along the foot of the hill and through the forest, so that I could see the tortoise slab where Bhagavan had once rested when his heart stopped, and from there reach the Asramam by the same route. So, I went to the tank opposite to the temple where some man was taking his bath and asked him whether the Shrine was open for worship.

"I am the priest. I will open the doors presently," he said. As I had heard that Bhagavan used to stay in the shrine now and then in his earlier days, I have gone there several times to see the place, with great enthusiasm, but had not been able to see it because the priests were never there and the doors were closed. I was therefore overjoyed at this opportunity of seeing the place and went inside with the priest. I saw the Goddess surrounded by Gautama and other Rishis, worshipped the Goddess, received *Prasad* of holy ashes (*Vibhuti*) and vermillion powder (*Kumkum*) and walked along the hill path to see the tortoise slab but could not identify it. Even so, I came back to the Asramam by that path. As soon as I got up after prostrating before Bhagavan he noticed the small packets in my hand and asked me what they were. I related to him the story of my journey.

Looking at Sundaresa Iyer who was close by, Bhagavan said, "It seems that that is the *Prasad* of Mother

Pachiamma. Bring it here." So saying, he took it and smearing it on his forehead, said, "There are two rooms to its right, newly built. Have you seen them?" I replied, "Yes. I have seen them. Some one had arranged a fireplace and was cooking." "Yes, yes. That is it," said Bhagavan. "They were built specially for cooking. When they were newly built, we thought of going round the hill and, on the way, camping at Pachiamma Shrine. The authorities who were working there were very pleased at our arrival and requested us to grace the new buildings with our stay and enjoy a feast by cooking there. That is just what we wanted, and we did the house-warming ceremony. When Nayana and myself had been living there, those rooms had not yet been built and so we used to do everything in the presence of the Mother (i.e. the idol of the Goddess) ".

"How did she get the name 'Pachaiamman'?" I asked. Bhagavan said, "Pachai means emerald colour. When Parvati came to Gautamāsrama to perform austerities to appease Iswara, Her form was of emerald colour and She performed austerities at that place. Then, it is said, that She went round the hill in Pradakshina, stayed at several places at different times continuing her austerities, and finally merged into Siva as a half of His body and came to be known as 'Apita Kuchāmba'".

"How was it that that Goddess was given the name of Durga?" asked one devotee. "It is said that the Goddess killed a demon called Durgama and so from that name was derived the name 'Durgā'", replied Bhagavan. The devotee again asked, "In the Durga Temple in this place, there is the tank (Tirtham) known as the Khadga Tirtha. What was its origin?"

Bhagavan : "It is said that the Goddess started from here for killing the demon, Mahishāsura. On killing the demon, the idol of Siva (Siva Linga) which was tied round his neck, was caught in her hand and could not be removed. She came here for a bath, but there was no water anywhere. She thereupon dug the ground with her sword and water gushed forth there. She took her bath in the water, released the idol of Siva from her hand, installed it on the bank of the tank, worshipped it with the water of that tank and then discarded the fiery spirit she had assumed to kill the demon. After that, she stayed on in the place to bestow boons on her devotees. That tank has a perennial supply of water. However great the scarcity of water experienced here, that tank will always have water."

Devotee : "We hear that Bhagavan repaired the Sri Chakra (a symbol of worship in the shape of a wheel) of that temple when it got damaged."

Bhagavan : "Yes. When I was in the Virupaksha cave, the Mahā Kumbhābhisekam of that Durga's temple was performed. Before that festival, they brought the Sri Chakra to me saying it was damaged slightly and wanted me to repair it. I acceded to their request."

So saying, Bhagavan became silent.

(64) VISIT OF THE HEAD OF PURI MUTT

9th January, 1949

About a week or ten days ago, the Puri Sankarāchārya came here. His meeting with Bhagavan was something unique. As the arrival of the Acharya was

known beforehand, the Sarvādhikari made all the required arrangements for the occasion. As you know, Bhagavan has been staying only in the Jubilee Hall during daytime. On the day of the arrival of the Acharya, devotees spread a tiger skin on Bhagavan's couch and decorated it in a fitting manner. By the side of the couch, a suitable seat was arranged for the Āchārya also. After Bhagavan had been out for his afternoon walk at 3 p.m. and had returned and resumed his seat on the couch, the devotees as usual prostrated before him and sat down. The Āchārya arrived at the Asramam at the appointed hour, went to his lodging in the Vēda Pātasala (School for Scriptures), made his ablutions and then, accompanied by his disciples, came to Bhagavan's presence.

At the time of his coming, Bhagavan sat cross-legged in his usual Padmāsana pose and with his characteristic silence. The Āchārya came to Bhagavan with his *Danda* (the staff of an ascetic) and saluted him. Bhagavan nodded his head in acceptance of the salutations and with great regard requested him by signs to sit on the seat arranged for him. He did not, however, sit there but sat down nearby on a deer-skin and began looking at Bhagavan with a fixed stare. Bhagavan too looked at him with an unwavering and compassionate look. Neither spoke. The audience also kept perfect silence like the still waters of a great lake. For about half an hour, both of them remained absolutely still like that, exemplifying the relationship between devotion and compassion. At that time, Bhagavan's face shone like the illumination of a crore of sun gods. Because of that brilliance, the faces of the people who came to witness this scene also blossomed like lotus flowers. A glorious voice saying, "What a splendour on Bhagavan's face!" appeared to ring in the hearts of all the people there. One amongst them

spontaneously said, "It will be very good indeed if someone takes a photo now." As though the silence were disturbed by those words, the Āchārya got up, respectfully asked for permission to leave, and went away to his lodging.

Seeing all this, I was reminded of Sri Dakshināmurthy who came to the earth to initiate Sanaka, Sanandana and others. "Vriddāḥ Sishyā Gurur yuvā" (The disciples are old and the Guru is young). Similarly, the Āchārya is a very old man and in contrast Bhagavan appeared to be a young man. The place also appeared at the time to be similar. The flower garden to the right was like Nandanavanam ; the Arunachala Hill at the back like Mount Kailas ; the almond tree to the left, with its several branches, like a banyan tree ; and the open space in front with a sea of human faces which had blossomed as if they were lotus flowers, like the great lake Mānasarovar. Like the saying, "Gurosthū Mownā Vyākhyānam Sishyāsthū Chhinnasamsayāḥ" (The Guru's sermon was 'Silence' and the doubts of the disciples were cleared). The Acharya did not ask any questions that day. It seems that before he came here, he had written regarding his doubts as to the sentence in the Agama Sastra beginning with "Haragowri Samyoge . . . Avachhāyā Yogah". The Asramam authorities did not reply to him giving Bhagavan's views as they felt that the matter could be explained when the Acharya came here. Hence when the next day the Āchārya asked Bhagavan about it, Bhagavan replied saying, "What is there ? It is a well known thing. 'Avachhāyā Yogam' means, when the force that is engaged in doing things, i.e. Mano Vritti (action of the mind) becomes pure and merges in Hara (Lord Siva). and when the shadow of the Self (Atma) falls on that force, it is called 'Avachhāyā'

'Yogam'." The Āchārya said he did not understand it. Bhagavan thereupon spread his benign look over him for about half an hour. The Āchārya's eyes got closed involuntarily. After experiencing indescribable bliss and with tears of joy and with hands folded on his head, he said, "Bhagavan, I have now understood it," and assuring us that he would be back by the time the Kumbhābhishhekam (consecration ceremony) is performed, he left on pilgrimage to the south accompanied by his disciples.

(65) THE ARRIVAL OF THE HEAD OF SIVAGANGA MUTT

10th January, 1949

After the Puri Sankarāchārya left, the conversation naturally turned on his visit. A devotee asked Bhagavan, "Amongst the Heads of the various Sankara Mutts, is he the only Head that has come here ? "

Bhagavan : "When I was in the Virupaksha cave, the Head of the Sivaganga Mutt* came there. He is the grandfather of the father of the present Head. Between him and the present Head of the Mutt there have been two other Heads."

Devotee : "Did he ask Bhagavan any questions ? "

Bhagavan : "What was there to ask ? He was also a wise man and a great Pandit. On seeing me, it seems he told one of those near him, 'If there is anyone that is happy, it is Ramana'."

*Sivaganga Mutt is a branch of the Sringeri Mutt.

Devotee : "Did he stay at the same place as Bhagavan ? "

Bhagavan : "No. No. That was a special meeting. He came to town with his disciples, took his lodgings in the choultry (a free lodging house) and invited me to that place. I declined the invitation saying that I had not the required learning to deserve such an honour.† Hearing my reply, he himself came to me with his disciples, bringing with him a big platter containing a laced shawl and Rs. 116/- in cash. While he was climbing the hill to come to me, I happened to be returning to Virupaksha cave from Mulaipal Tank. We met midway at a place where there was a tree. He placed the platter before me and requested me to accept the contents but I would not do so. At last, he took back the money and saying that the shawl would be useful to me during the winter, pressed me to accept it. As an outright refusal would not have been quite proper, I accepted the shawl. Subsequently I tore away the lace, got the borders stitched and used it for covering myself whenever necessary. That lace was here till recently. He went away immediately after that. He was very old even by then and passed away within a few days of coming here."

Devotee : "Did not any of the Heads of the Srin-geri Mutt visit you ? "

Bhagavan : "No. Narasimha Bharathi tried to come here several times, but did not succeed. It seems he always used to enquire about me."

Devotee : "Was he an Andhra ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. But why ? "

† It is a custom for Heads of a Mutt to present learned people with money, shawls, titles and the like.

Devotee : "One by name Narasimha Bharathi has written in Telugu a number of songs on Devi (*Devi Nakshatramālā*) beautifully and philosophically. I wanted to know if he were the same and hence the query."

Bhagavan : "May be. He was a Pandit and a poet also."

Devotee : "Why did he not come here even though he tried ?"

Bhagavan : "You see, he was the Head of a Mutt. They have several regulations. Moreover, people around will not ordinarily allow such things."

Devotee : "What can the people around do if he is really intent on going ?"

Bhagavan : "What you say is something strange. You say what can the people around do ? See my own condition. They have put bars around me, though wooden, as in the gaol. I may not cross these bars. There are people specially deputed to watch me and they keep watch on me by turns. I can't move about as I like ; they are there to prevent it. One person goes and another comes according to turns. What is the difference between these people and the police except that the former are not in uniform ? We are under their protection. Even if I want to go out to answer calls of nature, they must follow me to protect me. Even my going out must be according to the scheduled time. If any one wants to read anything to me or talk to me, they must obtain permission from the office. What do you call all this ? What is the difference between this and the gaol ? It is about the same thing for him (Sankarāchārya) too. The headship of a Mutt is also a sort of a gaol. What can he do, poor man ? "

Devotee : "It is perhaps because of that, Iswara got the name 'Bhakta Parādheena' — 'in the hands of the devotees ?'"

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is so. When there is trouble for Swāmitvam itself, how much more it should be for Iswara ? He must respond to whosoever calls and by whatsoever name he calls. He must appear in whatever form he is asked to come. He must stay wherever he is asked to stay. If he is asked not to take one step forward, he must stay wherever he is. Being so dependent on others, what liberty or freedom has he ?"

(66) ACCEPTANCE OF DİKSHA

13th January, 1949

A devotee who had heard about the meetings of the Head of the Sivaganga Mutt and the discussions about Narasimha Bharathi asked Bhagavan, "It seems a long time ago someone from the Sringeri Mutt requested Bhagavan to accept Diksha (formal initiation)."

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is so. That was during the early days of my stay at the Virupaksha cave. A Sastri residing in the Sringeri Mutt came to see me one morning. He saw me, spoke to me for a long time, and before going to the town for meals, drew near me and with folded arms and great devotion said, 'Swami ! I have a request to make. Please hear me.' When I asked him what it was, he said, 'Swami, as you are born a Brahmin, should you not take Sanyāsa in the regular way ? It is an ancient practice. You know all that. What is there for me to tell you ? I am anxious to include you in the

line of our Gurus. Hence, if you give me the permission, I will come here with all the requisite articles from my Mutt and give you the initiation. If you do not care to wear the full ochre-coloured robes (*Akhanda Kāshāyam*), I respectfully submit that it is enough if your loin cloth at least is of ochre colour. You may think over this well and give me a reply. I am going down the hill to take my meals and will come back by 3 p.m. All the members of our Mutt have heard of your greatness and I have come here to see you at their request. Please do us this favour.'

"A little while after he left, an old Brahmin came there with a bundle. His face appeared familiar. It could be seen from the outside of the bundle that there were some books in it. As soon as he came, he placed the bundle opposite me and like an old acquaintance, said, 'Swami, I have just come. I have not had a bath. There is no one to look after this bundle. Please look after it.' So saying he left the place. As soon as he went away, why, I do not know, but I felt like opening that bundle and seeing the books. As soon as I opened the bundle, I saw a Sanskrit book in Nāgari characters with the title 'Arunāchala Māhātmyam'. I did not know before that the Māhātmyam is in Sanskrit also. I was therefore surprised and as I opened the book I found the Sloka describing the greatness of this place in the words of Iswara :

योजनत्रयमात्रेऽस्मिन् क्षेत्रे निवसतां नृणाम् ।
दीक्षादिकं विनाप्यस्तु मत्सायुज्यं ममाज्ञया ॥

(To those who live within 24 miles of this place i.e. this Arunachala Hill, will get My Sāyujyam i.e. absorption into Me, freed from all bonds, even if they do not take any Diksha. This is my order.)

"As soon as I saw that Sloka, I felt I could give a fitting reply to that Sastri by quoting that Sloka and so hastily copied it out, for the Brahmin might come back at any moment, and then tied up the bundle as before after replacing the book. I showed this Sloka to the Sastri as soon as he came in the evening. As he was a learned man, he did not say anything further but with great reverence and fear saluted me, went away and, it seems, reported everything to Narasimha Bhārathi. Narasimha Bhārathi felt very sorry for what his disciples had done, and told them to stop all further efforts in that direction. I subsequently translated that Sloka and wrote it in a verse in Tamil, '*Yojanai Mūnrām Mittala Vasakku*'. It has now been added at the beginning of the five verses in praise of Arunachala (*Arunāchala Sthuthi Panchakam*). In the same way, many people tried to convert me to their path. So long as it was mere talk, I used to say, 'Yes, yes,' but never agreed to take any initiation. I always used to find some ruse to escape. Even the writing of verses too is about the same. I never wrote any of my own accord. Somebody used to ask me on some excuse or other. And I used to write on some urge from within. That is all."

Devotee : "There is such a long history behind only this one verse."

Bhagavan : "Yes. For every one of them, there is a story. If all of them were written down, it would become a big volume."

"If Bhagavan permits, they can be written," I said.

Bhagavan : "Have you nothing else to do?" So saying he changed the topic.

Devotee : "Did the Brahmin who brought the bundle come back again?"

Bhagavan : "I do not remember whether he came back or not, but the bundle was not there. I had got what I wanted. Was it not enough ? "

Devotee : "So, it would mean that Lord Arunachala himself came there in that form."

Bhagavan merely nodded his head silently.

(67) SUPERNATURAL SIGHTS ON ARUNACHALA

15th January, 1949

This afternoon, I went to Bhagavan's presence as early as 2 o'clock itself. Only the attendants and a few familiar devotees were there. Bhagavan was conversing with them about sundry matters. During the conversation, one of the devotees addressed Bhagavan : " You told us once that you had seen on this hill very, very high temples, gardens and such like. Was that all during the period you were on the hill ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. That was perhaps when I was in the Virupaksha cave. I closed my eyes. I felt I was walking on the hill itself towards the north-east. I saw at one place a nice flower garden, a big temple, a fine compound wall and a big Nandi (a bull carved in stone). There was a strange light. It was extremely pleasant. As I was looking at all these, time came for Puja (worship). The bell was rung and immediately after that I opened my eyes."

Devotee : "Bhagavan told us some time back that there was a big cave also."

Bhagavan : "Yes, yes. That also happened when I was living on the hill. I was going hither and thither when I found at one place a big cave. When I entered the cave, I saw a number of waterfalls, beautiful gardens, tanks within those gardens, well laid paths, fine lighting ; everything there was most pleasing. As I went farther and farther I saw a Realised Person (Siddha Purusha) seated like Dakshināmurthy under a tree on the banks of a lake in a forest. Around him, a number of saints (Munis) were seated. They were asking something and he was replying to them. That place appeared to me very familiar. That is all. I opened my eyes. Subsequently, after some time, when I saw *Arunāchala Puranam* in Sanskrit, I found the following Slokas wherein Lord Siva says :

अत्रासिद्धः पुनर्नित्यं वसाभ्यग्रे सुरचितः ।
ममांतरे गुहा दिव्या ध्यातव्या भोगसंयुता ॥
अभिस्तंथमयं रूपं अरुणाद्विरिति श्रुतः ।
ध्यायन् लिङ्गं मम बृहन्मन्दम् कुर्यात्पदक्षिणम् ॥

In these two Slokas that cave and that Siddha Purusha have been described and so I was surprised that what appeared to me in a trance was to be found in that book. So I wrote their translation in Tamil : ' *Angiyuru Vayumoli Mangugiri Yaga*' ; its meaning is, ' Though you are in the form of fire, you have kept away the fire and have taken the shape of a hill mainly to shower your blessings on the people. You are always living here in the form of a Siddha. The cave that appeared to me is in you with all the luxuries of the world.' Recently when the temple in Adi Annāmalai was renovated, it has been reported that

in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple a large tunnel was found and when people tried to find out its extent they saw that it was extending to the very centre of the hill. As they could not go in very far, they came back. I therefore thought that which occurred to me and what is in the Purāna appears to be true and that the tunnel was the way to the place I had seen. It is reported that Siddha Purushas come from the cave inside to the temple through that tunnel night after night and go back after worshipping Iswara. Why so far ? Recently, something like that was seen even here. I was going on to the hill as usual when, as I was getting near the steps over there, a big city appeared before me. There were huge buildings of several varieties ; well laid thoroughfares ; good lighting ; and it appeared to be a great city. At one place a meeting was being held ; Chadwick was with me. He was even saying, ‘Bhagavan, all this is so self-evident ! Who will believe if we say this is all a dream !’ Everything appeared as if it was actually happening. Meanwhile, I opened my eyes.”

Devotee : “Is all this really a dream ?”

Bhagavan : “I can’t say whether it is a dream or not. What is real ?”

(68) THE BIG SELF

16th January, 1949.

About ten days back an American young man came here. Knowing that he took photographs, some people from here arranged to get the elephant which lives in the Thousand-pillared Mandapam in Arunāchaleswarar

Temple and keep it in the open space by the side of the Jubilee Hall. Bhagavan on his return from the bath room stood by the side of the elephant and was giving it a feed, when that American took a photo. Yesterday morning, after 10 o'clock, some one brought the photo to Bhagavan, to show it to him. All people began to see it with some curiosity. They were talking amongst themselves about something that was written on the back of that photo. As I did not understand what all they were talking about, I asked Bhagavan about it quietly in a low tone.

Bhagavan : "Nothing particular. On the back of the photo it is written, 'A big Self which does not know the body and a big body which does not know the Self are at one place'".

Devotee : "What exactly could be his idea in writing thus ?"

Bhagavan : "That is easy. Though that elephant has such a big body it does not know the Self. For that reason, whatever food is given to it, it stands there dissatisfied trumpeting unceasingly. Perhaps because of that or for some other reason, it is stated to be a big body without knowing the Self. I stood there somehow with a shaky body ; so again, perhaps because of that or for any other reason, it is stated that I am the Big Self not knowing the body. That might be his idea."

Devotee : "That is true. Bhagavan always appears unconcerned about the body, does he not ?"

Bhagavan (with a smile) : "That's it. That's it. Chintha Dikshitulu has written saying that I am like a statue in the Madras Museum. Sowris has written saying that I am like a celluloid doll. People say something or other."

Devotee : " I suppose Jada Bharata also used to appear as though he were not concerned about the body."

Bhagavan : " What you say is true."

Devotee : " Is it because he was a big Self who did not know his body that he got the name Jada Bharatha ? "

Bhagavan : " What else could it have been ? It cannot mean that he was lying down inertly like a doll. It means that he was the personification of the Self who did not care for his body."

As an illustration of this Bhagavan himself in his early days was sitting in the Arunāchala temple compound either under a Madhuka (Ippa) tree or in a flower garden or in the vehicles' mandap or here and there without caring for his body. People who were coming and going, used to say, " He is sitting like a Jada (dull witted person) ; he must be a mad fellow ", and they never paid any attention to him. And Bhagavan has told us several times that he used to be amused at such talk and wish such madness would overtake all people. Not only that ; when under the instructions of the Sarvādhikari, Kunju-swāmi was serving Bhagavan as an attendant, he found Bhagavan's body and head were shaking and faltering and so, when there was no one else there but close disciples, he asked Bhagavan, " Bhagavan, although only in middle age, strangely enough, has a shaking of the head and of the body necessitating his walking with the aid of a stick ; what could be the reason for it ? " Bhagavan replied, it seems, with a smile, " What is there so strange in it ? If a big elephant is tied down in a small hut, what else will happen to that hut except troubles of all sorts ? This is the same."

Do you see what profound meaning there is in those words ? Without revealing this meaning to all people,

he says humorously now and then, "Do you see ? While all of you have two legs, I have three."

It is said in 'Mahavakya Ratnamala' about a Jnani :

अन्धवज्जडवच्चापि मूकवच्च महिंचरेत् ।

(He conducts himself in the world as a blind or dull or dumb man.)

(69) KUNDALINI SAKTI — CHINMAYA DEHA

18th January, 1949

Yesterday morning an Andhra youth came here with his wife. It seems he has come here after visiting the whole of the Himalayan region. In the afternoon at 3 o'clock he approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, is the manifestation of *Kundalini Śakti* (a form of Yogic power) possible only for those who follow the Yogic path of acquiring *Śakti* (power) or is it possible also for those who follow the path of devotion (*Bhakti*) or love (*Prem*) ? "

Bhagavan : "Who does not have *Kundalini Śakti* ? When the real nature of that *Śakti* is known, it is called *Akhandākāra Vritti* (Plenary consciousness) or *Aham Sphurana* (effulgence of 'I', 'I'). *Kundalini Śakti* is there for all people whatever path they follow. It is only a difference in name."

Questioner : "It is said that that *Sakti* manifests itself in five phases, ten phases, hundred phases and a thousand phases. Which is true ; five or ten or a hundred or a thousand ? "

Bhagavan : "Sakti has only one phase ; if it is said to manifest itself in several phases, it is only a way of speaking. The Sakti is only one."

Questioner : "To realise the Self, some say you must concentrate your mind on the *Anāhatam* (the 4th of the mystical *Chakras* (plexuses) of the body) ; some say on the *Sahasrāram* (a mystical plexus in the brain with a thousand petals) ; and some say on the *Mūlādhāram* (a mystical plexus about the organs of generation). Which is the most important ? "

Bhagavan : "All are important. Self (Atman) is everywhere in the body. Some say you should see it in the *Mūlādhāram* ; some say in the *Anāhatam* and some say in the *Sahasrāram*. It is the same whichever it is. But, for all of them, the place of birth and of dissolution is *Anāhatam* only."

Questioner : "Can a *jnani* help not only those who follow his path but also others who follow other paths ? "

Bhagavan : "Undoubtedly. He can help people whatever path they chose to follow. It is something like this. Suppose there is a hill. There will be very many paths to climb it. If he were to ask people to climb by the way he came, some may like it and some may not. If people who do not like it are asked to climb by that path, and by that path only, they will not be able to come up. Hence a *Jnani* helps people following any particular path in that very path itself whatever it may be. People who are midway may not know about the merits and demerits of other paths, but one who has climbed the summit and sits there observing others coming up is able to see all the paths. He will there-

fore be able to tell people who are coming up to move a little to this side or that or to avoid a pitfall. The goal is the same for all, you see."

The young man was not satisfied with the replies given by Bhagavan and again began asking questions about *Kundalini Śakti* and how it arises. Bhagavan appeared unconcerned about those questions but when they were asked repeatedly, said, "What do I know about those paths ? Please ask those who know them well." Giving up that topic, the young man took up the topic of spiritual bodies (*Chinmaya Dehas*) by saying, "My Guru gave a *Darshan* in *Chinmaya Rupam* (form) on such and such a day, spoke to me of this and that," and started speaking about the miracles performed by his deceased Guru. Bhagavan did not speak but kept quiet for some time. At last the young man said, "Is it a fact that Lord Krishna is still with his *Chinmaya Deha* (spiritual body ?")

Bhagavan replied with patience : " Does *Chinmaya Deha* mean the human body ? *Chinmaya* means *Chit-prakāsa*, i.e. lustre of the spirit. That light is always existent :

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयास्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

— Gita, Chap. 10-20.

(Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the heart of all beings ; I am the beginning and middle and also the end of all beings.)

Does that mean that He is in the hearts of all beings with this material body ? It means He is in the hearts of all

beings in the shape *Aham Sphurana* (effulgence of 'I', 'I'). That effulgence of the Self is known as *Chit-prakāsa* or *Chin-maya*."

Questioner : " Is the same thing said of other Mahāpurushas (great personages) or is it that Lord Krishna's body becomes *Chin-mayam* and remains like that ? "

Bhagavan : " Oho ! You think that that body becomes *Chin-mayam* and sits somewhere. The whole world is *Chit-mayam*. That being so is it that one body alone has become *Chin-mayam* ? Visions (*Sākshātkāras*) are also like this. People say that they descend from somewhere with a body. That which is omnipresent you leave or ignore and talk of Kāram and *Sākshātkāram*."

Questioner : " My Guru stated that a great personage who would reform the whole world will be born. Can you tell me when he will be born ? "

Bhagavan did not reply but kept quiet. A devotee who was close by took up the thread of the conversation and said to the young man, " Sir, you are not able to realise the greatness of the Mahāpurusha that is sitting opposite to you ; so what is the sense in asking him himself when a Mahāpurusha will be born ? You are not able to understand even that much. If you have so many doubts, could you not have asked your Guru himself ? Enough of this here. You may go to your Guru who is in *Chin-maya* body and ask him."

The young man thereupon quietened down and gave up further questioning.

(56) WHERE IS THE SWAMI ?

11th September, 1948

The day after Bhagavan told us that he does not now have that happiness which he enjoyed when he was sleeping on an earthen platform, some devotees went to Skandasramam after obtaining Bhagavan's permission and, on their way back, saw the Virupaksha cave. On returning to the Asramam they asked Bhagavan if the earthen platform referred to yesterday was the same as that now in the verandah there, and whether it was a fact that Bhagavan himself constructed that platform.

Bhagavan : "Yes, that is a fact. We all thought that it would be convenient for visitors to sit on. So I built it with stones and mud. It was only some time later that it was cemented".

I said : "Is it a fact that while the platform was being constructed some stranger came and enquired of Bhagavan where the Swami was and Bhagavan sent him away saying that the Swami had gone somewhere ? "

Bhagavan said, "How did you come to know of that ?" and laughed. I replied that Echamma had told me about it. Thereupon Bhagavan related the incident to us :

"Yes. It is a fact. One morning I arranged the stones, prepared the mud and was building the platform. Some stranger came there and asked me 'Where is the Swami ?' There was no one else besides myself. So I said, 'Swami has just gone out somewhere.' He again asked, 'When will he return ?' I said, 'I don't know.' As he was afraid it might be a long time for the Swami

to return, he descended the hill when he met Echamma coming up, who asked him why he was going down. When he mentioned what had happened, she asked him to accompany her saying she would show him the Swami. Echamma came up, put down inside the cave the vessel containing the food she had brought with her, prostrated before me, rose and told the stranger, 'There he is. He is the Swami.' The man was surprised and, after prostrating before me, said to her, 'Is he the Swami ?' When I came here a little while ago, he was building the platform. Not knowing who he was, I asked him 'Where is the Swami ?' and he said 'The Swami has gone out somewhere.' I believed him and so started going back.' Echamma thereupon began scolding me for misleading him. Then I said, 'Oho ! Then do you want me to tie a board round my neck saying 'I am the Swami ?'"

Devotee : "It seems you misled people in the same way even after coming here ?"

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is true. We did not have so many buildings then. We had only this hall where all are now sitting. Even this was originally constructed as a kitchen with a chimney. Gopala Pillay the father of our Shanmugam Pillay and several other devotees insisted on having a hall for Bhagavan to sit in, and said that the construction of a kitchen could wait. The chimney that had already been constructed was therefore dismantled and the building was converted into this hall. Between this hall and Mother's temple there used to be a thatched shed for a kitchen and by its side near the black neem tree there used to be the store room. That also was a thatched shed. Daily, we used to get up early in the morning and cut vegetables. One day

while I was thus cutting vegetables keeping the door of the store room open, and all the others had gone out on different errands, two or three people who were going round the hill came into the hall and, finding the couch empty, came round to the store room. They were people who frequently visited the Asramam. What has that got to do with it ? My head was wholly covered with a bed-sheet and as I was cutting vegetables, my face was not visible. 'Sir, Swami is not on the couch. Where is he ?' they asked me. I replied saying that he had just gone out and would be back in a little while. They thereupon went away without waiting as it would be too late for them to go round the hill. Some one here noticed that and asked me why I had misled them. 'What else to do ?' I said. 'Was I to tell them that I was the Swami ?' Such incidents happened quite a number of times."

When I mentioned all this to a devotee, who has been in the Asramam from very early days, he said, "Not only that. You know there used to be a swami by name, Dandapani. He was a well-built person, with a big paunch and with an ochre-coloured loin cloth. He had a stout body and a stentorian voice. Bhagavan therefore used to say that it would be a good thing to keep him at the doorway during the Krithikai Festival of Lights so that people who came in crowds could take him to be the Swami, prostrate before him and go without troubling Bhagavan. Bhagavan has thus always been anxious to avoid publicity."

(57) ASTROLOGY

20th September, 1948

A few days ago an astrologer came here. At about 10 a.m., the day after his arrival, he asked Bhagavan several questions on astrology and obtained suitable replies. I give below a brief report of their conversation :

Questioner : "Swami ! According to the astrological science, predictions are made about coming events taking into account the influence of the stars. Is that true ? "

Bhagavan : "So long as you have the feeling of egoism all that is true. When that egoism gets destroyed all that is untrue."

Questioner : Does it mean that astrology won't be true in the case of those whose egoism is destroyed ? "

Bhagavan : "Who is there to say it won't be true ? There will be seeing only if there is one who sees. In the case of those whose egoism is destroyed, even if they appear to see they do not really see. The window is open. Even so there must be some one to see. Does the window see anything ? "

Questioner : "If that ego were not there how could the body continue to function from day to day ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is it. The body is a house for us. This house will be properly maintained only if you are in it. Hence we must realise that we are keeping the house habitable only so long as we are in it and must never give up the knowledge that the house is separate from the Self. The moment that is forgotten

the feeling of ego comes in and troubles begin. Everything in the world thus appears real and the destruction of that feeling is the destruction of the EGO. When that ego is destroyed nothing (of this world) is real. What is to happen will happen ; and what is not to happen will not happen."

Questioner : "You say that what is to happen will happen and what is not to happen will not happen ; if that is so, why should it be said that good deeds must be done ? "

Bhagavan : "If something good is done, it results in happiness. Hence people say good deeds must be done."

Questioner : "Yes. That is why elders say that sorrow is adventitious."

Bhagavan : "That is so. Sorrow is adventitious. It is only happiness that is true. Every living being desires happiness because his natural state is the embodiment of happiness. All *sādhanas* (spiritual efforts) are for overcoming adventitious sorrow ; when a headache comes on casually, you have to get rid of it by medicine. If it is a permanent ailment of the body attached to it from birth to death, why should you try to get rid of it ? Just as boils and other diseases of the body are cured by a doctor's treatment, sorrows which are the result of various difficulties can be overcome by *sādhana* specially aimed at them. This body itself is a disease. The root cause of it is ignorance. If for that ignorance the medicine called Jnana is administered all inherent diseases will disappear at once."

Questioner : "Is it possible to get immediate results by *sādhana* ? "

Bhagavan : Some yield immediate results and some do not. That depends upon the intensity or otherwise of the *sādhana*. If good acts or evil acts are done with great intensity the results will manifest themselves immediately ; otherwise the results are slow. The results, however, are inevitable."

(58) LIFE ON THE HILL

30th September, 1948

Recently Bhagavan himself changed and wrote Tamil verses of Atmabodha in the *Kalivenpa* metre. As it has now been printed in a book form, that has since been the topic of frequent discussions in Bhagavan's presence. Yesterday afternoon, Bhagavan himself said addressing a devotee sitting nearby : "Look. When we were in the Virupaksha cave I wrote in this small note book in the Malayalam script at the request of Palaniswami a good portion of Sankara's stanzas and *Upadesas*. This Atma-bodha also is found in that notebook ; but at that time I did not feel like writing a commentary thereon. Off and on, the stanzas used to come to my mind. You know what happened once. We all started for the summit of the Arunachala hill, with all necessary things for cooking our food and eating it whenever and wherever convenient. That was when we were in the Virupaksha cave. Palaniswamy stayed behind in charge of the cave. By the time we reached the Edudonalu (Seven Ponds) it was rather hot. So, we bathed and then wanted to cook our food. We took out the cooking vessels and all the foodstuffs such as dhall, salt and ghee and also arranged the fireplace and then we found that we had not brought

the most important thing of all, namely the match-box. Each person began offering advice as to what to do, but in vain. The cave was too far away to go and fetch a match-box. Moreover it was very hot and everyone was terribly hungry. Some tried to make a fire by striking one piece of flint against another but without success. Some tried to rub one piece of wood against another as they do in Yagnas for lighting the sacrificial fire but that too was not successful. The second stanza in Atmabodha came to my mind, namely,

बोधोऽन्य साधनेभ्यो साक्षात्मोक्षैक साधनम् ।
पाकस्य वान्हिवत् ज्ञानं विना मोक्षो न सिध्यति ॥

“I read it out, explained the meaning and kept them all in good humour.”

Another devotee said, “We do not know the meaning of that Sloka.”

Bhagavan replied with a smile, “You want to know its meaning ? It means that just as you cannot cook whatever articles you may have unless you have fire, so also you cannot attain liberation unless you have knowledge.”

“What happened afterwards ?” asked someone.

Bhagavan said, “Some one appears to have sent word through one of the grass-cutters who were returning home with head-loads of grass. Palaniswami sent a match-box through some one of those going up the hill for wood-cutting. Subsequently we lit a fire, cooked and ate. You know how the cooking was done ? Rice,

dhall and vegetables were all put together and boiled and then some salt was added and a *kitchadi* (hotch-potch) was made. All of us had decided on it beforehand. After food, we took a little rest and then started for the summit. To enable them to understand the stanza '*Bodhonya Sādhanebhyo*' I continued to explain its full significance to them during our walk. On reaching the summit, I said to them, 'You see the amount of trouble experienced in reaching here. We climbed to a little extent and then had to mix a lot of things and eat before we could climb further. For preparing the food we had no fire, and so nothing could be done. Similarly, you may have everything for teaching and learning but without understanding there cannot be full ripening of wisdom. With that fire of *Jnana* all worldly things must be mixed up and swallowed to attain the highest state.' After that we came back straight to the cave before it was dark. In those days we never felt it difficult or tiresome to go to the summit, so we used to go whenever we felt like it. When I think of it nowadays, I begin to wonder whether I ever went to the summit."

"Is it a fact that Echamma and others also used to accompany you ?" I asked. "Yes. Even the old woman, Mudaliar Pātti, used to come with us. Both of them used to bring food everyday without fail. They would not listen to me. Even if I went away somewhere just to avoid them, they used to find me out somehow," said Bhagavan. I remarked, "We complain of pain in the legs for several days if we go up to Skandasramam even once. It is remarkable how these old women managed to go up to Skandasramam everyday with a bundle on their head ; and sometimes elsewhere also, wherever Bhagavan happened to be. Their great desire to fall at the feet of Bhagavan perhaps gave them the required

strength." With a nod of approval and a smile, Bhagavan was silent.

(59) PLAYING WITH CHILDREN

10th October, 1948.

A few days ago, Mahadeva Sastri, son of Kavyakanta Ganapathi Sastri, came here. Bhagavan introduced him to us all. As he is now living in this place our talk turned on his father Sri Kavyakanta yesterday afternoon. Bhagavan began telling us :

"When I was living in Virupaksha cave, sometime in 1903, Nāyana* came there with his family. At that time this Mahadeva was about four or five years of age. Nāyana prostrated before me and then asked the little boy to do likewise. He appeared not to have heard it and, with an air of indifference, kept quiet. Nāyana too did not mind it. Then, all of a sudden, that boy prostrated before me in full length (*Sāshtāṅga* — with his eight limbs touching the ground). Like a young boy who has had his Thread Ceremony he placed his hands on his ears and then touched my feet. I wondered how that little boy could have known the correct procedure of prostration and felt that it must have come from family traditions."

I said, "Yes. Every habit must come out from family traditions."

Bhagavan : "That is so. This Mahadeva has since changed a lot; I used to talk with him frequently.

* Sri Kavyakanta was always addressed as 'Nāyana' which means 'father' in Telugu.

During the days when I was living in the Mango cave, Nāyana invited all those near and dear to him, to listen to his reading of "The Uma Sahasram" in Pachiamman Shrine. His family also came. Mahadeva was then eight years of age. I asked him if he remembered me. He did not say anything in reply and quietly went away to play. After a while, somebody came to see me. They prostrated before me and telling me that they had come once before, asked me if I remembered them. As I did not remember, I was silent. I do not know how he noticed that incident, but after they left, Mahadeva came to me running and said, "Swami, what did those people ask you first ?" I replied saying that they had enquired of me if I remembered them as they had come once before and that I had been silent as I did not remember them. He promptly stated that he likewise did not remember me. I felt amused. You know what I did one day ? Seating Mahadeva on my back I began swimming in the tank opposite the Pachiamman Shrine from one end to the other. When we were half-way through he began pressing me down, greatly elated, shouting 'Aha, Hai !' as cart drivers do to their bullocks. I was tired and it seemed as though both of us would be drowned. I was of course very anxious that he should be saved from such a catastrophe. So I managed somehow to reach the other side."

I said, "For one who helps people to swim across the mighty ocean of *Samsāra* (the material world) is that difficult ?"

Another devotee enquired if it were a fact that Bhagavan and Nāyana used to swim in the Pandava Tank.

Bhagavan replied, "Yes. That also was only in those days. We used to try to excel each other in swimming. That was great fun."

Another devotee said, "It seems you played marbles with children ?"

Bhagavan replied, "Yes. That was so. That too was while we were in the Virupaksha cave. The holes dug for the purpose of playing marbles must be there even now. Those children sometimes used to bring packets of sweetmeat. We all shared them. During Deepavali they used to put aside my share of crackers and bring them up to me. We used to fire the crackers together. It was most entertaining."

I was reminded of the *Leelas* (playful acts) of Lord Krishna's boyhood days. Even now Bhagavan plays with children if they come here with toys.

स तत्वज्ञो बालोन्मत्त पिशाचवत् ।

जड वृत्या लेकमाचरेत् ॥

— *Mahāvākyaratnamāla.*

(The Knower of Truth should go about the world, (outwardly) stupid like a child, a madman or a devil.)

(60) SADHU SANGAM

20th October, 1948

At 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon an elderly lady came to Bhagavan along with her children, grand-sons, grand-daughters and others. On seeing them, Bhagavan

said with a smile, "Oh Kanthi ! Is that you ? I thought it was somebody else." She went to Bhagavan with some familiarity, showed him all her progeny, prostrated before him and came back to sit with the ladies. Looking at me Bhagavan asked, "Do you know who she is ?" On my replying in the negative, he told us :

"There is in the town a gentleman called Seshachala Iyer. She is his daughter. This lady, Echamma's niece, Chellamma, Rameswara Iyer's daughter, Rajamma and some others are all of about the same age. They were all quite young when I was on the hill. They used to climb up the hill and come to me very often. Sometimes they used even to bring their dolls and perform the dolls' marriages. At other times they used to bring rice, dhall etc., cook and eat and give me also something from their preparations."

"I take it, Bhagavan used to play with them ?" I said. "Yes. They used to come up whenever they felt like it. They were all very young, you see, and so they were independent. Now she has a big family and so she cannot come whenever she wants to. As it is a long time since she came last, I was wondering who it was," said Bhagavan. "Not only did you play marbles with the little boys but you played *Gaccha Kāyalu* (children's game) with the little girls. They were all born lucky," I said. Nodding his head in affirmation, Bhagavan related an incident that had occurred at that time.

"It was in those days that Chellamma came to me with a paper in her hand. When I looked at it out of curiosity, I found written on it the following Sloka :

सज्जन सङ्गे संप्रात्पे समस्तनियमैरलम् ।
तालवृन्तेन किं कार्यं लब्धेमलयमारुते ॥

(If association with sages is obtained, to what purpose are the various methods of self-discipline ? Tell me, of what use is a fan when the cool, gentle south wind is blowing ?)

“I translated it into Tamil in verse form beginning with ‘*Sādhu Sangathāl*’. Subsequently it was included in the supplement to the “Forty Verses” (verse 3). You have it in prose, have you not ? ” asked Bhagavan, and I replied in the affirmative.

I asked, “How did Chellamma get that paper and why did she bring it to you ? ” Bhagavan replied, “Echamma used to fast every now and then, saying it was Ekādasi or it was Krithikai and the like. Chellamma too started to fast with Echamma. But then Chellamma was very young and used to suffer a lot in consequence. Echamma usually sent food for me through her. On a Krithikai day she brought me food even though she was fasting that day. How could I eat when she was not taking any food ? I told her that she should not indulge in such fasts being young, and somehow prevailed upon her to eat. Next day while she was coming up the hill with food she found that paper. It appeared to contain some Sloka and so she brought it here to show it to me. When I saw that, I found it contained this Sloka. I said, ‘Look. It contains the same thing I told you about yesterday.’ She asked me what its meaning was and so, I translated it into a verse in Tamil and explained the meaning to her. Thereafter she gave up her fasts. She had great faith in me. Even after she attained age she

never would write anything on paper without the words 'Sri Ramana' to begin with. Those children used to recite before me all the songs and verses they learnt. When Chellamma passed away all of them felt as if they lost their own sister." said Bhagavan.

One devotee said, "It is stated in the Biography that when the news of her death was announced, Bhagavan was visibly moved and expressed sorrow. Is that a fact ?" Bhagavan said that it was a fact and was silent. You know, Bhagavan has said several times that a Jnani weeps with those who weep and laughs with those who laugh.

(61) BHIKSHA IN AGRAHĀRAM

20th November, 1948

From 2-30 p.m. this afternoon Bhagavan was telling us about the happenings of the early days of his coming to Tiruvannamalai. It was 3 o'clock. Gambhiram Kuppanna Sastri brought a marriage invitation card, gave it to Bhagavan and prostrated before him. After talking to him for a while about the marriage Bhagavan looked at us and said, "It seems the grand-daughter of Gambhiram Seshayya is going to be married. This is the invitation card." "Is that so ?" I said. With a smile Bhagavan enquired, "Do you know why these people get their surname as Gambhiram ?" "I do not know," I said:

Bhagavan : "These people belong to the family of Akkanna and Madanna. Gambhiram is the title given to his ministers, Akkanna and Madanna, by the Golkonda

Ruler. That has become their surname now. You know there is the tomb of Bhagavataswami in Cuddalore: That Bhagavataswami belonged to this family."

Questioner : " Is that so ? Then was that Bhagavataswami a Brahmin ? "

Bhagavan : " Yes. He was a Brahmin. When he was lying somewhere near Cuddalore unmindful of his body, the maternal grandfather of Somasundaram Pillai who happened to be in Cuddalore brought him home and kept him until he breathed his last. Kuppanna and the rest of his family were with that Swami all the time. It is only after that Swami passed away that they came here to be with me. I suppose you know that he is Gambhiram Seshayya's elder brother's son ? "

Questioner : " That I know. But they are Andhras, and how did they come to style themselves Iyers ? "

Bhagavan : " That is because they have been staying in this part of the country for a very long time ; may be for some generations. When I was in Gurumurtham, Krishna Iyer the brother of Sesha Iyer was working here as Salt Inspector. After I left Gurumurtham, I stayed for some time in the Arunagirinātha Temple opposite to the Ayyankulam tank. During that period, I went one night to the Agraharam for alms and I called at Krishna Iyer's house. He was playing cards at the time seated on a mat with three others and before a candle light. When I clapped my hands (as is usually done by Bhagavan to draw the attention of the householders) they were startled. Krishna Iyer felt ashamed, hurriedly removed all the paraphernalia of the cards, mixed some rice and gave me alms. At that time I did not know who they were. After

Seshayya came here, he told me that Krishna Iyer was his brother. It seems his brother felt highly repentant for sitting there playing cards when the Swami came and thereafter completely stopped card playing."

Questioner : "So, does that mean that staying here, Bhagavan used to go out to collect alms personally ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. I used to go out every night. I went to Arunagirinātha temple in the month of August or September 1898. As soon as I went there to stay, I told Palaniswami that I would go my way and he should go his and sent him away. But although he came back the same evening, I myself went out for alms. At times I used to go even during daytime. At night people used to wait for me outside, with lanterns, to give me alms. Seshayya's brother also used to wait similarly for my arrival. I was there for about a month only. As it was near the Agraaharam the crowds began to grow. With a view to avoiding all the rows incidental to crowds, I went up the hill to stay. In those days, going out for alms used to be an exhilarating experience. I used to accept two or three handfuls of food at each place and eat. By the time I had thus eaten at three or four houses my belly would be full and I used to return back home."

Questioner : "Perhaps the other householders used to feel disappointed at your not visiting their houses."

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is so. That is why the next day I used to go to the other side of the Agraaharam. I do not think on my visits I left out even one house in that Agraaharam."

Questioner : "How blessed those householders must be ! "

(62) THE LOTUS FEET OF THE MASTER

4th November, 1948

I do not know if you have noticed that there is a big light-red mole on the sole of Bhagavan's right foot. I too did not notice it for a long time. Only the other day I saw it. As you are aware, during the winter months, a charcoal stove is lighted and kept near Bhagavan to warm his hands and feet. I feared therefore that the stove had been kept too near, resulting in the sole of the foot getting burnt, and so asked Bhagavan anxiously. Bhagavan replied : "Oh ! It is nothing. It has been there since my childhood." I did not attach much importance to it at the time. Yesterday, however, during some conversation, I broached the subject with Aunt Alamelu (Bhagavan's sister). She said, "I was also once perturbed on seeing it and asked Bhagavan. He laughed and told me that it had been there even at birth. He also stated that it was by that mark of identification that his uncle had recognised him after he had run away from home."

You know, we used to read in fairy tales (Kasi Majli Stories) that great personages have a pearl in their navel and a lotus flower on their instep. I went to sleep thinking of that mole, and the foot of Bhagavan appeared in my dream. With that thought in mind I went to the Asramam early this morning, by half-past seven. By that time Bhagavan had returned from the bath room by the side of the cow-shed and had sat down on the couch. After all the others had prostrated before him, I too prostrated and got up, and standing, continued to stare at his foot. Noticing this, Bhagavan looked at me enquir-

ingly. "Nothing," I said, "I am looking at that foot which has all the characteristics of a great personage (*Mahāpurusha*)." "Is that all?" said Bhagavan with a smile and was about to open the newspaper to read it when I said, "It seems that when Auntie enquired about that mole, you stated that it was by that sign you were recognised by your uncle when you ran away from home."

"Putting the paper down and sitting cross-legged in Padmasana pose, Bhagavan replied, "Yes. It is stated in the 'Ramana Leela', as you know, when my younger uncle, Subba Iyer, passed away, my other uncle Nelliappa Iyer, while he was in Madurai, came to know through Annamalai Thampuran that I was here. However much Thampuran told him, Nelliappa Iyer was not sure about my identity. So when he came here he could recognise me only by that mole."

"How anxious he must have felt!" I said.

Bhagavan then remarked, "How could he not be anxious? He used to look after us with great care after we had lost our father. I came away like this and so he was always fearful for my safety. In the meantime Subba Iyer also passed away and so the burden of looking after Subba Iyer's family also fell on him. It was then that he heard that I was here. He came here running, with great concern. Subba Iyer had great courage and pride, but this man was very meek and mild. If it had been Subba Iyer, he would never have gone back home leaving me here. He would have bundled me up and carried me away. As I am destined to stay here, my whereabouts were not known so long as he was alive. It was known only a month after he passed away. Nelliappa Iyer, being spiritually minded and mild in his ways,

left me here saying, 'Why trouble him ?'" So saying, Bhagavan became silent.

"It seems that the watchman of the garden, Rama Naicker did not allow him even to enter the garden?" I enquired.

Bhagavan : "No. He was not allowed. That is why he wrote a chit and sent it inside. For writing the chit, however, he had neither pen nor pencil. What could he do, poor man ! He took out a neem twig, sharpened the end to a point, plucked a ripe prickly pear from its stalk, cut it open, dipped the twig into the red juice of the pear, and with it wrote the chit and sent it on to me. He finally came in and realised that there was no chance of my accompanying him. Subsequently, he saw in a neighbour's garden a learned man giving a discourse on some book to a small gathering and so went to enquire about me. In the view of that learned man I was an ignorant person knowing nothing, and he said, 'That boy is sitting there without any education and with a crude philosophy'. My uncle was naturally worried because I was young ; had not learnt anything from anyone and might turn out to be a good-for-nothing fellow. So he told that gentleman, 'Please keep an eye on my nephew and teach him something, if possible', and went away. For a long time, he (that learned man) held the view that I knew nothing, and tried once or twice to teach me 'something, but I never cared. Later on, when I was giving a discourse on the 'Gita Saram' in the ~~Sesanya~~ Mutt, he came there. He then discussed with me various matters and when he heard my explanations and expositions of the Gita, he said, 'Oho ! You are such a great man ! I thought you were illiterate.' So saying, he suddenly prostrated before me and went away. Nelliappa Iyer,

however, continued to feel sad for a long time for my supposed ignorance and lack of education."

On my enquiring whether he ever came back, Bhagavan said, "Yes. He came back twice when I was in the Virupaksha cave. On the first occasion, I never spoke anything. Though I was speaking to someone before he came, when I learnt he was coming I kept silent as I did not like to say anything before an elder such as he. But you know what happened when he came another time ? I did not know beforehand about his coming. Some people wanted me to explain to them the meaning of Dakshinamurthy Stotra, while I was in the Virupaksha cave, and so I began explaining. Daily I used to sit facing the door ; that day I sat with my back to it. Hence I did not know of his arrival. He came in quietly and sat outside listening to me. We came up to the Sloka 'Nānā Chidra'. After I gave out its meaning and began my commentary thereon, he suddenly came inside and sat down. What could I do ? I felt unconcerned and gave my commentary without any hesitation. After hearing it all, he felt that his nephew was not an ordinary person, that he knew the subject very well and hence there was no need to worry any further. He went away fully satisfied. Till then he was always anxious about me. That was his last visit. He never came again. He passed away a few days later." Bhagavan's voice quivered, as he said that.

"This incident has not been mentioned in the Biography. Why is it ?" I asked. Bhagavan replied saying, "It ought to be there. But they never asked me and I never told them."

(63) PACHIAMMA — DURGA

22nd December, 1948

Today is Tuesday, you see. Hence I obtained Bhagavan's permission yesterday evening itself and started for going round the hill (*Giri Pradakshina*) early morning at 3-30. By the time I reached Pachiamma Shrine, the sun had just risen. As the day was not yet advanced, I thought of going from there along the foot of the hill and through the forest, so that I could see the tortoise slab where Bhagavan had once rested when his heart stopped, and from there reach the Asramam by the same route. So, I went to the tank opposite to the temple where some man was taking his bath and asked him whether the Shrine was open for worship.

"I am the priest. I will open the doors presently," he said. As I had heard that Bhagavan used to stay in the shrine now and then in his earlier days, I have gone there several times to see the place, with great enthusiasm, but had not been able to see it because the priests were never there and the doors were closed. I was therefore overjoyed at this opportunity of seeing the place and went inside with the priest. I saw the Goddess surrounded by Gautama and other Rishis, worshipped the Goddess, received *Prasad* of holy ashes (*Vibhuti*) and vermillion powder (*Kumkum*) and walked along the hill path to see the tortoise slab but could not identify it. Even so, I came back to the Asramam by that path. As soon as I got up after prostrating before Bhagavan he noticed the small packets in my hand and asked me what they were. I related to him the story of my journey.

Looking at Sundaresa Iyer who was close by, Bhagavan said, "It seems that that is the *Prasad* of Mother

Pachiamma. Bring it here." So saying, he took it and smearing it on his forehead, said, "There are two rooms to its right, newly built. Have you seen them?" I replied, "Yes. I have seen them. Some one had arranged a fireplace and was cooking." "Yes, yes. That is it," said Bhagavan. "They were built specially for cooking. When they were newly built, we thought of going round the hill and, on the way, camping at Pachiamma Shrine. The authorities who were working there were very pleased at our arrival and requested us to grace the new buildings with our stay and enjoy a feast by cooking there. That is just what we wanted, and we did the house-warming ceremony. When Nayana and myself had been living there, those rooms had not yet been built and so we used to do everything in the presence of the Mother (i.e. the idol of the Goddess) ".

"How did she get the name 'Pachaiamman'?" I asked. Bhagavan said, "Pachai means emerald colour. When Parvati came to Gautamāsrama to perform austerities to appease Iswara, Her form was of emerald colour and She performed austerities at that place. Then, it is said, that She went round the hill in Pradakshina, stayed at several places at different times continuing her austerities, and finally merged into Siva as a half of His body and came to be known as 'Apita Kuchāmba'".

"How was it that that Goddess was given the name of Durga?" asked one devotee. "It is said that the Goddess killed a demon called Durgama and so from that name was derived the name 'Durgā'", replied Bhagavan. The devotee again asked, "In the Durga Temple in this place, there is the tank (Tirtham) known as the Khadga Tirtha. What was its origin?"

Bhagavan : "It is said that the Goddess started from here for killing the demon, Mahishāsura. On killing the demon, the idol of Siva (Siva Linga) which was tied round his neck, was caught in her hand and could not be removed. She came here for a bath, but there was no water anywhere. She thereupon dug the ground with her sword and water gushed forth there. She took her bath in the water, released the idol of Siva from her hand, installed it on the bank of the tank, worshipped it with the water of that tank and then discarded the fiery spirit she had assumed to kill the demon. After that, she stayed on in the place to bestow boons on her devotees. That tank has a perennial supply of water. However great the scarcity of water experienced here, that tank will always have water."

Devotee : "We hear that Bhagavan repaired the Sri Chakra (a symbol of worship in the shape of a wheel) of that temple when it got damaged."

Bhagavan : "Yes. When I was in the Virupaksha cave, the Mahā Kumbhābhisekam of that Durga's temple was performed. Before that festival, they brought the Sri Chakra to me saying it was damaged slightly and wanted me to repair it. I acceded to their request."

So saying, Bhagavan became silent.

(64) VISIT OF THE HEAD OF PURI MUTT

9th January, 1949

About a week or ten days ago, the Puri Sankarāchārya came here. His meeting with Bhagavan was something unique. As the arrival of the Acharya was

known beforehand, the Sarvādhikari made all the required arrangements for the occasion. As you know, Bhagavan has been staying only in the Jubilee Hall during daytime. On the day of the arrival of the Acharya, devotees spread a tiger skin on Bhagavan's couch and decorated it in a fitting manner. By the side of the couch, a suitable seat was arranged for the Āchārya also. After Bhagavan had been out for his afternoon walk at 3 p.m. and had returned and resumed his seat on the couch, the devotees as usual prostrated before him and sat down. The Āchārya arrived at the Asramam at the appointed hour, went to his lodging in the Vēda Pātasala (School for Scriptures), made his ablutions and then, accompanied by his disciples, came to Bhagavan's presence.

At the time of his coming, Bhagavan sat cross-legged in his usual Padmāsana pose and with his characteristic silence. The Āchārya came to Bhagavan with his *Danda* (the staff of an ascetic) and saluted him. Bhagavan nodded his head in acceptance of the salutations and with great regard requested him by signs to sit on the seat arranged for him. He did not, however, sit there but sat down nearby on a deer-skin and began looking at Bhagavan with a fixed stare. Bhagavan too looked at him with an unwavering and compassionate look. Neither spoke. The audience also kept perfect silence like the still waters of a great lake. For about half an hour, both of them remained absolutely still like that, exemplifying the relationship between devotion and compassion. At that time, Bhagavan's face shone like the illumination of a crore of sun gods. Because of that brilliance, the faces of the people who came to witness this scene also blossomed like lotus flowers. A glorious voice saying, "What a splendour on Bhagavan's face!" appeared to ring in the hearts of all the people there. One amongst them

spontaneously said, "It will be very good indeed if someone takes a photo now." As though the silence were disturbed by those words, the Āchārya got up, respectfully asked for permission to leave, and went away to his lodging.

Seeing all this, I was reminded of Sri Dakshināmurthy who came to the earth to initiate Sanaka, Sanandana and others. "Vriddāḥ Sishyā Gurur yuvā" (The disciples are old and the Guru is young). Similarly, the Āchārya is a very old man and in contrast Bhagavan appeared to be a young man. The place also appeared at the time to be similar. The flower garden to the right was like Nandanavanam ; the Arunachala Hill at the back like Mount Kailas ; the almond tree to the left, with its several branches, like a banyan tree ; and the open space in front with a sea of human faces which had blossomed as if they were lotus flowers, like the great lake Mānasarovar. Like the saying, "Gurosthū Mownā Vyākhyānam Sishyāsthū Chhinnasamsayāḥ" (The Guru's sermon was 'Silence' and the doubts of the disciples were cleared). The Acharya did not ask any questions that day. It seems that before he came here, he had written regarding his doubts as to the sentence in the Agama Sastra beginning with "Haragowri Samyoge . . . Avachhāyā Yogah". The Asramam authorities did not reply to him giving Bhagavan's views as they felt that the matter could be explained when the Acharya came here. Hence when the next day the Āchārya asked Bhagavan about it, Bhagavan replied saying, "What is there? It is a well known thing. 'Avachhāyā Yogam' means, when the force that is engaged in doing things, i.e. Mano Vritti (action of the mind) becomes pure and merges in Hara (Lord Siva). and when the shadow of the Self (Atma) falls on that force, it is called 'Avachhāyā'

'Yogam'." The Āchārya said he did not understand it. Bhagavan thereupon spread his benign look over him for about half an hour. The Āchārya's eyes got closed involuntarily. After experiencing indescribable bliss and with tears of joy and with hands folded on his head, he said, "Bhagavan, I have now understood it," and assuring us that he would be back by the time the Kumbhābhishhekam (consecration ceremony) is performed, he left on pilgrimage to the south accompanied by his disciples.

(65) THE ARRIVAL OF THE HEAD OF SIVAGANGA MUTT

10th January, 1949

After the Puri Sankarāchārya left, the conversation naturally turned on his visit. A devotee asked Bhagavan, "Amongst the Heads of the various Sankara Mutts, is he the only Head that has come here ? "

Bhagavan : "When I was in the Virupaksha cave, the Head of the Sivaganga Mutt* came there. He is the grandfather of the father of the present Head. Between him and the present Head of the Mutt there have been two other Heads."

Devotee : "Did he ask Bhagavan any questions ? "

Bhagavan : "What was there to ask ? He was also a wise man and a great Pandit. On seeing me, it seems he told one of those near him, 'If there is anyone that is happy, it is Ramana'."

* Sivaganga Mutt is a branch of the Sringeri Mutt.

Devotee : "Did he stay at the same place as Bhagavan ? "

Bhagavan : "No. No. That was a special meeting. He came to town with his disciples, took his lodgings in the choultry (a free lodging house) and invited me to that place. I declined the invitation saying that I had not the required learning to deserve such an honour.† Hearing my reply, he himself came to me with his disciples, bringing with him a big platter containing a laced shawl and Rs. 116/- in cash. While he was climbing the hill to come to me, I happened to be returning to Virupaksha cave from Mulaipal Tank. We met midway at a place where there was a tree. He placed the platter before me and requested me to accept the contents but I would not do so. At last, he took back the money and saying that the shawl would be useful to me during the winter, pressed me to accept it. As an outright refusal would not have been quite proper, I accepted the shawl. Subsequently I tore away the lace, got the borders stitched and used it for covering myself whenever necessary. That lace was here till recently. He went away immediately after that. He was very old even by then and passed away within a few days of coming here."

Devotee : "Did not any of the Heads of the Srin-geri Mutt visit you ? "

Bhagavan : "No. Narasimha Bharathi tried to come here several times, but did not succeed. It seems he always used to enquire about me."

Devotee : "Was he an Andhra ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. But why ? "

† It is a custom for Heads of a Mutt to present learned people with money, shawls, titles and the like.

Devotee : "One by name Narasimha Bharathi has written in Telugu a number of songs on Devi (*Devi Nakshatramālā*) beautifully and philosophically. I wanted to know if he were the same and hence the query."

Bhagavan : "May be. He was a Pandit and a poet also."

Devotee : "Why did he not come here even though he tried ?"

Bhagavan : "You see, he was the Head of a Mutt. They have several regulations. Moreover, people around will not ordinarily allow such things."

Devotee : "What can the people around do if he is really intent on going ?"

Bhagavan : "What you say is something strange. You say what can the people around do ? See my own condition. They have put bars around me, though wooden, as in the gaol. I may not cross these bars. There are people specially deputed to watch me and they keep watch on me by turns. I can't move about as I like ; they are there to prevent it. One person goes and another comes according to turns. What is the difference between these people and the police except that the former are not in uniform ? We are under their protection. Even if I want to go out to answer calls of nature, they must follow me to protect me. Even my going out must be according to the scheduled time. If any one wants to read anything to me or talk to me, they must obtain permission from the office. What do you call all this ? What is the difference between this and the gaol ? It is about the same thing for him (Sankarāchārya) too. The headship of a Mutt is also a sort of a gaol. What can he do, poor man ? "

Devotee : "It is perhaps because of that, Iswara got the name 'Bhakta Parādheena' — 'in the hands of the devotees ?'"

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is so. When there is trouble for Swāmitvam itself, how much more it should be for Iswara ? He must respond to whosoever calls and by whatsoever name he calls. He must appear in whatever form he is asked to come. He must stay wherever he is asked to stay. If he is asked not to take one step forward, he must stay wherever he is. Being so dependent on others, what liberty or freedom has he ?"

(66) ACCEPTANCE OF DİKSHA

13th January, 1949

A devotee who had heard about the meetings of the Head of the Sivaganga Mutt and the discussions about Narasimha Bharathi asked Bhagavan, "It seems a long time ago someone from the Sringeri Mutt requested Bhagavan to accept Diksha (formal initiation)."

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is so. That was during the early days of my stay at the Virupaksha cave. A Sastri residing in the Sringeri Mutt came to see me one morning. He saw me, spoke to me for a long time, and before going to the town for meals, drew near me and with folded arms and great devotion said, 'Swami ! I have a request to make. Please hear me.' When I asked him what it was, he said, 'Swami, as you are born a Brahmin, should you not take Sanyāsa in the regular way ? It is an ancient practice. You know all that. What is there for me to tell you ? I am anxious to include you in the

line of our Gurus. Hence, if you give me the permission, I will come here with all the requisite articles from my Mutt and give you the initiation. If you do not care to wear the full ochre-coloured robes (*Akhanda Kāshāyam*), I respectfully submit that it is enough if your loin cloth at least is of ochre colour. You may think over this well and give me a reply. I am going down the hill to take my meals and will come back by 3 p.m. All the members of our Mutt have heard of your greatness and I have come here to see you at their request. Please do us this favour.'

"A little while after he left, an old Brahmin came there with a bundle. His face appeared familiar. It could be seen from the outside of the bundle that there were some books in it. As soon as he came, he placed the bundle opposite me and like an old acquaintance, said, 'Swami, I have just come. I have not had a bath. There is no one to look after this bundle. Please look after it.' So saying he left the place. As soon as he went away, why, I do not know, but I felt like opening that bundle and seeing the books. As soon as I opened the bundle, I saw a Sanskrit book in Nāgari characters with the title 'Arunāchala Māhātmyam'. I did not know before that the Māhātmyam is in Sanskrit also. I was therefore surprised and as I opened the book I found the Sloka describing the greatness of this place in the words of Iswara :

योजनत्रयमात्रेऽस्मिन् क्षेत्रे निवसतां नृणाम् ।
दीक्षादिकं विनाप्यस्तु मत्सायुज्यं ममाज्ञया ॥

(To those who live within 24 miles of this place i.e. this Arunachala Hill, will get My Sāyujyam i.e. absorption into Me, freed from all bonds, even if they do not take any Diksha. This is my order.)

"As soon as I saw that Sloka, I felt I could give a fitting reply to that Sastri by quoting that Sloka and so hastily copied it out, for the Brahmin might come back at any moment, and then tied up the bundle as before after replacing the book. I showed this Sloka to the Sastri as soon as he came in the evening. As he was a learned man, he did not say anything further but with great reverence and fear saluted me, went away and, it seems, reported everything to Narasimha Bhārathi. Narasimha Bhārathi felt very sorry for what his disciples had done, and told them to stop all further efforts in that direction. I subsequently translated that Sloka and wrote it in a verse in Tamil, '*Yojanai Mūnrām Mittala Vasakku*'. It has now been added at the beginning of the five verses in praise of Arunachala (*Arunāchala Sthuthi Panchakam*). In the same way, many people tried to convert me to their path. So long as it was mere talk, I used to say, 'Yes, yes,' but never agreed to take any initiation. I always used to find some ruse to escape. Even the writing of verses too is about the same. I never wrote any of my own accord. Somebody used to ask me on some excuse or other. And I used to write on some urge from within. That is all."

Devotee : "There is such a long history behind only this one verse."

Bhagavan : "Yes. For every one of them, there is a story. If all of them were written down, it would become a big volume."

"If Bhagavan permits, they can be written," I said.

Bhagavan : "Have you nothing else to do?" So saying he changed the topic.

Devotee : "Did the Brahmin who brought the bundle come back again?"

Bhagavan : "I do not remember whether he came back or not, but the bundle was not there. I had got what I wanted. Was it not enough ? "

Devotee : "So, it would mean that Lord Arunachala himself came there in that form."

Bhagavan merely nodded his head silently.

(67) SUPERNATURAL SIGHTS ON ARUNACHALA

15th January, 1949

This afternoon, I went to Bhagavan's presence as early as 2 o'clock itself. Only the attendants and a few familiar devotees were there. Bhagavan was conversing with them about sundry matters. During the conversation, one of the devotees addressed Bhagavan : " You told us once that you had seen on this hill very, very high temples, gardens and such like. Was that all during the period you were on the hill ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. That was perhaps when I was in the Virupaksha cave. I closed my eyes. I felt I was walking on the hill itself towards the north-east. I saw at one place a nice flower garden, a big temple, a fine compound wall and a big Nandi (a bull carved in stone). There was a strange light. It was extremely pleasant. As I was looking at all these, time came for Puja (worship). The bell was rung and immediately after that I opened my eyes."

Devotee : "Bhagavan told us some time back that there was a big cave also."

Bhagavan : "Yes, yes. That also happened when I was living on the hill. I was going hither and thither when I found at one place a big cave. When I entered the cave, I saw a number of waterfalls, beautiful gardens, tanks within those gardens, well laid paths, fine lighting ; everything there was most pleasing. As I went farther and farther I saw a Realised Person (Siddha Purusha) seated like Dakshināmurthy under a tree on the banks of a lake in a forest. Around him, a number of saints (Munis) were seated. They were asking something and he was replying to them. That place appeared to me very familiar. That is all. I opened my eyes. Subsequently, after some time, when I saw *Arunāchala Puranam* in Sanskrit, I found the following Slokas wherein Lord Siva says :

अत्रासिद्धः पुनर्नित्यं वसाभ्यग्रे सुरचितः ।
ममांतरे गुहा दिव्या ध्यातव्या भोगसंयुता ॥
अमिस्तंथमयं रूपं अरुणाद्विरिति श्रुतः ।
ध्यायन् लिङ्मं मम बृहन्मन्दम् कुर्यात्पदक्षिणम् ॥

In these two Slokas that cave and that Siddha Purusha have been described and so I was surprised that what appeared to me in a trance was to be found in that book. So I wrote their translation in Tamil : ' *Angiyuru Vayumoli Mangugiri Yaga*' ; its meaning is, ' Though you are in the form of fire, you have kept away the fire and have taken the shape of a hill mainly to shower your blessings on the people. You are always living here in the form of a Siddha. The cave that appeared to me is in you with all the luxuries of the world.' Recently when the temple in Adi Annāmalai was renovated, it has been reported that

in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple a large tunnel was found and when people tried to find out its extent they saw that it was extending to the very centre of the hill. As they could not go in very far, they came back. I therefore thought that which occurred to me and what is in the Purāna appears to be true and that the tunnel was the way to the place I had seen. It is reported that Siddha Purushas come from the cave inside to the temple through that tunnel night after night and go back after worshipping Iswara. Why so far ? Recently, something like that was seen even here. I was going on to the hill as usual when, as I was getting near the steps over there, a big city appeared before me. There were huge buildings of several varieties ; well laid thoroughfares ; good lighting ; and it appeared to be a great city. At one place a meeting was being held ; Chadwick was with me. He was even saying, ‘Bhagavan, all this is so self-evident ! Who will believe if we say this is all a dream !’ Everything appeared as if it was actually happening. Meanwhile, I opened my eyes.”

Devotee : “Is all this really a dream ?”

Bhagavan : “I can’t say whether it is a dream or not. What is real ?”

(68) THE BIG SELF

16th January, 1949.

About ten days back an American young man came here. Knowing that he took photographs, some people from here arranged to get the elephant which lives in the Thousand-pillared Mandapam in Arunāchaleswarar

Temple and keep it in the open space by the side of the Jubilee Hall. Bhagavan on his return from the bath room stood by the side of the elephant and was giving it a feed, when that American took a photo. Yesterday morning, after 10 o'clock, some one brought the photo to Bhagavan, to show it to him. All people began to see it with some curiosity. They were talking amongst themselves about something that was written on the back of that photo. As I did not understand what all they were talking about, I asked Bhagavan about it quietly in a low tone.

Bhagavan : "Nothing particular. On the back of the photo it is written, 'A big Self which does not know the body and a big body which does not know the Self are at one place'".

Devotee : "What exactly could be his idea in writing thus ?"

Bhagavan : "That is easy. Though that elephant has such a big body it does not know the Self. For that reason, whatever food is given to it, it stands there dissatisfied trumpeting unceasingly. Perhaps because of that or for some other reason, it is stated to be a big body without knowing the Self. I stood there somehow with a shaky body ; so again, perhaps because of that or for any other reason, it is stated that I am the Big Self not knowing the body. That might be his idea."

Devotee : "That is true. Bhagavan always appears unconcerned about the body, does he not ?"

Bhagavan (with a smile) : "That's it. That's it. Chintha Dikshitulu has written saying that I am like a statue in the Madras Museum. Sowris has written saying that I am like a celluloid doll. People say something or other."

Devotee : " I suppose Jada Bharata also used to appear as though he were not concerned about the body."

Bhagavan : " What you say is true."

Devotee : " Is it because he was a big Self who did not know his body that he got the name Jada Bharatha ? "

Bhagavan : " What else could it have been ? It cannot mean that he was lying down inertly like a doll. It means that he was the personification of the Self who did not care for his body."

As an illustration of this Bhagavan himself in his early days was sitting in the Arunāchala temple compound either under a Madhuka (Ippa) tree or in a flower garden or in the vehicles' mandap or here and there without caring for his body. People who were coming and going, used to say, " He is sitting like a Jada (dull witted person) ; he must be a mad fellow ", and they never paid any attention to him. And Bhagavan has told us several times that he used to be amused at such talk and wish such madness would overtake all people. Not only that ; when under the instructions of the Sarvādhikari, Kunju-swāmi was serving Bhagavan as an attendant, he found Bhagavan's body and head were shaking and faltering and so, when there was no one else there but close disciples, he asked Bhagavan, " Bhagavan, although only in middle age, strangely enough, has a shaking of the head and of the body necessitating his walking with the aid of a stick ; what could be the reason for it ? " Bhagavan replied, it seems, with a smile, " What is there so strange in it ? If a big elephant is tied down in a small hut, what else will happen to that hut except troubles of all sorts ? This is the same."

Do you see what profound meaning there is in those words ? Without revealing this meaning to all people,

he says humorously now and then, "Do you see ? While all of you have two legs, I have three."

It is said in 'Mahavakya Ratnamala' about a Jnani :

अन्धवज्जडवच्चापि मूकवच्च महिंचरेत् ।

(He conducts himself in the world as a blind or dull or dumb man.)

(69) KUNDALINI SAKTI — CHINMAYA DEHA

18th January, 1949

Yesterday morning an Andhra youth came here with his wife. It seems he has come here after visiting the whole of the Himalayan region. In the afternoon at 3 o'clock he approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, is the manifestation of *Kundalini Śakti* (a form of Yogic power) possible only for those who follow the Yogic path of acquiring *Śakti* (power) or is it possible also for those who follow the path of devotion (*Bhakti*) or love (*Prem*) ? "

Bhagavan : "Who does not have *Kundalini Śakti* ? When the real nature of that *Śakti* is known, it is called *Akhandākāra Vritti* (Plenary consciousness) or *Aham Sphurana* (effulgence of 'I', 'I'). *Kundalini Śakti* is there for all people whatever path they follow. It is only a difference in name."

Questioner : "It is said that that *Sakti* manifests itself in five phases, ten phases, hundred phases and a thousand phases. Which is true ; five or ten or a hundred or a thousand ? "

Bhagavan : "Sakti has only one phase ; if it is said to manifest itself in several phases, it is only a way of speaking. The Sakti is only one."

Questioner : "To realise the Self, some say you must concentrate your mind on the *Anāhatam* (the 4th of the mystical *Chakras* (plexuses) of the body) ; some say on the *Sahasrāram* (a mystical plexus in the brain with a thousand petals) ; and some say on the *Mūlādhāram* (a mystical plexus about the organs of generation). Which is the most important ? "

Bhagavan : "All are important. Self (Atman) is everywhere in the body. Some say you should see it in the *Mūlādhāram* ; some say in the *Anāhatam* and some say in the *Sahasrāram*. It is the same whichever it is. But, for all of them, the place of birth and of dissolution is *Anāhatam* only."

Questioner : "Can a *jnani* help not only those who follow his path but also others who follow other paths ? "

Bhagavan : "Undoubtedly. He can help people whatever path they chose to follow. It is something like this. Suppose there is a hill. There will be very many paths to climb it. If he were to ask people to climb by the way he came, some may like it and some may not. If people who do not like it are asked to climb by that path, and by that path only, they will not be able to come up. Hence a *Jnani* helps people following any particular path in that very path itself whatever it may be. People who are midway may not know about the merits and demerits of other paths, but one who has climbed the summit and sits there observing others coming up is able to see all the paths. He will there-

fore be able to tell people who are coming up to move a little to this side or that or to avoid a pitfall. The goal is the same for all, you see."

The young man was not satisfied with the replies given by Bhagavan and again began asking questions about *Kundalini Śakti* and how it arises. Bhagavan appeared unconcerned about those questions but when they were asked repeatedly, said, "What do I know about those paths ? Please ask those who know them well." Giving up that topic, the young man took up the topic of spiritual bodies (*Chinmaya Dehas*) by saying, "My Guru gave a *Darshan* in *Chinmaya Rupam* (form) on such and such a day, spoke to me of this and that," and started speaking about the miracles performed by his deceased Guru. Bhagavan did not speak but kept quiet for some time. At last the young man said, "Is it a fact that Lord Krishna is still with his *Chinmaya Deha* (spiritual body ?")

Bhagavan replied with patience : " Does *Chinmaya Deha* mean the human body ? *Chinmaya* means *Chit-prakāsa*, i.e. lustre of the spirit. That light is always existent :

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयास्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

— Gita, Chap. 10-20.

(Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the heart of all beings ; I am the beginning and middle and also the end of all beings.)

Does that mean that He is in the hearts of all beings with this material body ? It means He is in the hearts of all

beings in the shape *Aham Sphurana* (effulgence of 'I', 'I'). That effulgence of the Self is known as *Chit-prakāsa* or *Chin-maya*."

Questioner : " Is the same thing said of other Mahāpurushas (great personages) or is it that Lord Krishna's body becomes *Chin-mayam* and remains like that ? "

Bhagavan : " Oho ! You think that that body becomes *Chin-mayam* and sits somewhere. The whole world is *Chit-mayam*. That being so is it that one body alone has become *Chin-mayam* ? Visions (*Sākshātkāras*) are also like this. People say that they descend from somewhere with a body. That which is omnipresent you leave or ignore and talk of Kāram and *Sākshātkāram*."

Questioner : " My Guru stated that a great personage who would reform the whole world will be born. Can you tell me when he will be born ? "

Bhagavan did not reply but kept quiet. A devotee who was close by took up the thread of the conversation and said to the young man, " Sir, you are not able to realise the greatness of the Mahāpurusha that is sitting opposite to you ; so what is the sense in asking him himself when a Mahāpurusha will be born ? You are not able to understand even that much. If you have so many doubts, could you not have asked your Guru himself ? Enough of this here. You may go to your Guru who is in *Chin-maya* body and ask him."

The young man thereupon quietened down and gave up further questioning.

(70) THE SELF

19th January, 1949

By the time I went to the Asramam this morning, a devotee was asking something and Bhagavan was replying by saying, "First find out who you are."

Devotee : "Before beginning the self-enquiry, 'Who am I?', is it necessary to give up all actions (*Karma Sanyāsa*)?"

Bhagavan (with a smile) : "What is your idea of *Sanyāsa*? Sitting, getting up, going about, and eating, are *Karmas* (actions). Of these which are you going to give up? That is why ancients say, when they talk of *Karma Sanyāsa*, 'First give up the feeling that you are the doer'."

Devotee : "Sankarāchārya gave prominence to *Karma Sanyāsa*."

Bhagavan : "Yes, he did. But then, even he did *Karma* (action). He went from one country to another and from village to village and established the doctrine of Advaita (non-duality). At that time, there were no railways. He went on foot. Is not all that *Karma*? The meaning is, when a person becomes a Jnani, nothing affects him, whatever he may do. He does everything for the welfare of the world. He, the Jnani, gives up only the feeling of ego namely that he is doing everything. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna Bhagavan said :

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम् ।
संकरस्य च कर्तास्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥

— Gita, Chap. 3-24.

(If I do not perform action, these worlds will perish; nay, I should be the author of confusion of castes and of the destruction of these people.)

सत्काः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।
कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथा सत्काश्चिकीर्षुलोकसंग्रहम् ॥

— Gita, Chap. 3-25.

(Arjuna, as the unwise act with attachment, so should the wise man, seeking maintenance of the world order, act without attachment.)

“That means, if I do not perform action, no one else will perform actions. There will be confusion of castes. Why should I be the cause of that? That is why I am doing all actions. While ignorant people do actions with desires, I do them without desires.’ That is the meaning. Hence *Karma Sanyāsa* means, one should know the difference between attributes of the senses and the attributes of Karma, and with that knowledge remain desireless and, at the same time unattached to all actions and conduct oneself as only a witness. That is *Karma Sanyāsa*. There is not much use in mere outward *Sanyāsa*.”

Devotee : “But then Lord Krishna has said that He is the *Kartā* (doer) and He is the *Bhōktā* (enjoyer.) ”

Bhagavan : “Yes. He did say so. But when Mahatmas talk of *Kartrutvam* (doership) and *Bhōktrutvam* (enjoyership), it is different. For them *Aham* means Self (*Swarūpa*). It is not the ‘I’ which says, ‘I am the body’.

अहमात्मा मुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयास्थितः ।
अहमादिक्ष्म मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

— Gita, Chap. 10-20.

(Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the heart of all beings. So I am the beginning and the middle and also the end of all beings.)

"The thing called 'I' is the all-pervading Self (Atma). That which the sages speak about as 'I' is the functioning of the Self only and of the body. The 'I' which ignorant people talk of is about the body, and this is *Asura Vāsanā*. They say, 'I am Iswara. I should be worshipped.' When they say that, they are in for trouble. About this *Asura Vāsanā*, three Slokas have been written briefly in the 16th chapter of the Gita. In the 'Vasudēvamananam', a whole chapter has been devoted to this subject. When the ancients claim to be Iswara, they do not talk of this body. Self itself is Iswara. That is Brahman, Atman and all the rest. That which is always present is *Aham*. To be is Brahman according to Brahma Gita. That which is NOT is *Māyā*. If you look at that which is NOT, that which IS remains as it is. If you realise that, which is your SELF, there will not be so many questions."

(71) BLISS OF THE SELF

22nd January 1949

At 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon, two pilgrims came and sat in Bhagavan's presence. It was clear from their attitude that they were thinking of asking something. After a while, one of them said, "Swami, it is all right if we sit up for meditation with closed eyes but if we keep them open, the outer senses give trouble. What can we do ? "

Bhagavan : "What happens even if the eyes are kept open? It is enough if you make the mind sleep just like your sleeping in a house, keeping the windows open."

Devotee : "That means the mind should be kept away from worldly affairs. However much we try, we are not able thus to control the mind."

Bhagavan : "Yes, that is true. That is why it is said that when a child tries to catch its own shadow by running after it, and weeps when unable to do so, the mother comes and prevents him from running. So also, the mind should be prevented from running away."

Devotee : "By what method can that be prevented ?"

Bhagavan : "The mind should be held by hearing and meditating on the sayings of the Vedānta and thereby prevent it from going astray."

Devotee : "That means, you must give up worldly pleasures and catch hold of Ātma Ānanda (Bliss of the Self). Is that so ?"

Bhagavan : "Ānanda (Supreme Bliss) always exists. It is only the worldly things that have to be given up. If they are given up, what remains is only Bliss. That which IS, is the Self. Where is the question of catching that which IS ? That is one's own nature (Swabhāva) ".

Devotee : "Is that nature also called Swarūpa (the Self) ?"

Bhagavan : "Yes. There is no difference between the two."

Devotee : "If it is said that Ānanda is the Self itself, then who is it that experiences it ?"

Bhagavan : "That is the point. So long as there is one who experiences, it shall have to be stated that Ānanda is the Self itself. When there is no one to experience, where is the question of a form for Ānanda ?"

It is only that which 'IS' remains. That IS is 'Ānanda'? That is the Self. So long as the feeling that the Self is different from oneself there will be one who enquires and experiences, but when one realises the Self there will be no one to experience. Who is there to ask? What is there to say? In common parlance, however, we shall have to say that Bliss is the Self or is our Real Nature (*Swarūpa*)".

Devotee: "That is all right, Swami. But, however much we try, this mind does not get under control and envelopes the *Swarūpa* so that it is not perceptible to us. What is to be done?"

Bhagavan with a smile placed his little finger over his eye and said, "Look. This little finger covers the eye and prevents the whole world from being seen. In the same way this small mind covers the whole universe and prevents the Brahman from being seen. See how powerful it is!"

(72) YĀTHANĀ ŚARIRAM *

23rd January, 1949

At 3 o'clock this afternoon a young man approached Bhagavan and asked, "Swami, it is said that Siva is in Kailas, Vishnu in Vaikunt, Brahma in Satyalōk, while Dēvēndra and several Dēvathas are in Dēvalōk. Is it a fact that they are all there?"

* *Yatana Sarira*—the subtle body tormented by pleasure and pain in the dream world and also after death (in fact the mind itself).

Bhagavan : "Oho ! That is what you want to know ! But first tell me, is it a fact that you are existent ? If you are in existence, they too must be existing. If you are not in existence they too are not."

Devotee : "It is said that there are some known as *Pithru Dēvathas* (the Manes), in the world of the Manes and that if *Srādh* † is not performed they will punish the people concerned. Do the Manes really exist separately ? "

Bhagavan : "That is just what I have been saying. So long as you have the feeling of ego, that you are the doer, all those beings are in existence. If that ego disappears there is nothing else in the world."

Devotee : "What about devils ? "

Bhagavan : "It is the same thing with regard to them. If there are Devatas in this world, devils also are there. If you are in existence, everything else is in existence. If you are not in existence, nothing else is. If you examine yourself everything will be found in yourself only. There will then be no scope for these doubts."

Devotee : "It is said that when a man dies he goes to the world of Yama with a *Yāthāndā* body after crossing the horrid river Vaitharini, and that the messengers of death create untold miseries to the body. Is it a fact that there is a world of Yama ? "

Bhagavan : (smilingly) : "Aha ! If there is a heaven there is also a hell. All these exist only if you exist ; otherwise not. First tell me, are you in existence or not ? We shall then consider the question of the existence of hell."

† *Srādh* is death anniversary.

Devotee : "There it is. Bhagavan is using his *Brahmāstram* (invincible weapon). What can I say now?"

Bhagavan : "All right. I won't use it. You may ask whatever you like.

Devotee : "What exactly is meant by a *Yāthānā* Body ? "

Bhagavan : "When we are asleep this body lies inert. We have dreams. In those dreams, we experience happiness sometimes and troubles at other times. When the body is asleep who is it who experiences all these ? It must be admitted that it is the mind. That mind is called *Sookshma* (subtle) or *Yāthānā* body. After all, it is only the body that dies when a person dies."

Devotee : "So *Yāthānā* body means it is only the mind.

Bhagavan : "Otherwise what else can there be that troubles the body other than the mind ? "

So saying Bhagavan was silent.

(73) IN THE SERVICE OF THE MOTHER

14th February, 1949

Arrangements are now in progress for the *Kumbhābhishēkam* (*Kumbhābhishēkam* literally means sprinkling of consecrated water from a big pot. This ceremony is performed when a temple is newly constructed and the water is sprinkled over the tower of the temple with elaborate ceremonies). Hence conversation in Bhagavan's presence centred around Mother Alagamma. This morning,

the office staff brought a vessel containing sacred Ganges water and also a Kamandalam (earthen or wooden pot used by ascetics), saying some devotees had sent them. Immediately thereafter, Bhagavan began to tell us about some happenings of the past.

"When mother came to live with me I was in the Virupaksha cave itself. At that place there was no water. She was, therefore, inconvenienced on that account. We used to go to the Skandasramam to bathe as there was a waterfall. She was too old, you see, and so she could not accompany us. We had at the time two big Kamandalams with us. We made one of them ourselves. The other, some one brought and gave us. Each could hold a small potful of water. I used to bring water in both of them, carrying one in each hand. She used to sit down wearing a small cloth and I used to pour the water over her head just as we do Abhishēkam over an idol. That is how she used to have her bath. There was no cooking and some one used to wash her cloth and bring it back. That was all. If water was brought in those two Kamandalams all her requirements used to be met."

"That means the Kamandalams were very large," I said.

"Yes. They were large," said Bhagavan. "What has become of them now?" asked some devotee.

Bhagavan : "One of them must be here. The other disappeared even while we were in the Skandāsramam. Vallimalai Muruganar used to visit us even while we were in Virupaksha cave. After our residence was changed to the Skandāsramam, he came again. He had a loud voice and was very fond of chit-chatting. He cast his eyes on

that Kamandalam. He knew it was no good asking Perumalswamy and others and so he approached Mother. She was a simpleton. If anyone flattered her by saying that there was no one equal to her in this world, she used to give away whatever was asked of her. He was clever enough to discover this. 'Mother, you have given birth to a diamond of a son. There is no one to equal you in this world. Your son is a very great personage, unparalleled,' and so on. After praising her like that for some time, he finally said, 'If you give me one Kamandalam, I will bring Ganges water in it and will do you Abhishēkam with it.' No sooner he said that, than she was overjoyed and gave away the Kamandalam. He could not, however, bring Ganges water during her lifetime ; but recently, that is, about twelve years back, he did bring Ganges water in that Kamandalam and performed Abhishēkam over Mother's image, thus keeping his word. That was the first time she had Abhishēkam performed with Ganges water. Subsequently, several people did Abhishēkam with Ganges water but they brought it in small vessels whereas he brought it in a large Kamandalam. The Kamandalams that we have just received are small in comparison."

(74) TIGERS' SKIN

15th February, 1949

After hearing what Bhagavan had said yesterday about the Kamandalams, a devotee asked, "Is it a fact that somebody asked Bhagavan to give him the tigers' skin on which Bhagavan was sitting and, as it was being taken away, someone here prevented him from doing

so ? " Bhagavan said with a smile, " Yes. That happened only after we came here. It was in 1924, or about that time. One Sadhu came here to see me. I happened to be seated at the time on a tigers' skin. He cast his eyes upon it. Waiting for an opportunity when no one was with me, he said, ' Swami, I want that tigers' skin. Please give it to me.' I said that I had no objection to give it, but if any one saw him taking it away, they might not keep quiet. He said that there was no one present at the time and that he would manage to walk away with it. I said, ' All right. Just as you like. I will get up. Take it. But if any one sees you and stops you from going away with it, I won't be responsible.' So saying, I got up. He took the tigers' skin, rolled it, tied it and was going out with it when Dandapani Swami, who was coming in, happened to notice it. He said, ' What nonsense ! Bhagavan sits on that tiger's skin. You can't take it away.' The Sadhu protested, saying, ' I am taking it away with Bhagavan's permission.' Dandapani Swami, however, remonstrated saying, ' Was it proper for you to ask for it when Bhagavan was sitting on it ? Is it proper for you to take it away ? No. That cannot be allowed.' Thereupon both of them came to me for resolving the dispute. I told Dandapani Swami that the Sadhu pressed me to give him the tigers' skin and so I gave it away but that I had already warned him about others preventing him from taking it away if they noticed it. I left it to them both to resolve the dispute as best as they could. Dandapani Swami found fault with the Sadhu saying that it was highly improper for him to have asked Bhagavan to get up from his seat and to have asked him to give away the tigers' skin, and finally Dandapani Swami prevented it from being taken away." We were all very much amused.

A devotee said, "Bhagavan, you have replied to them both in a very funny way."

Bhagavan : "What to do ? Some one brings that tigers' skin and requests me to sit on it. I accede to his request. Some one else comes here and says, 'Please get up. I want that tigers' skin.' So I get up. What do I lose ? Dandapani Swami prevented that Sadhu from taking it away. He was then in power. They could settle the score between themselves. Why should I bother ? "

Devotee : "So Bhagavan has no part or lot in the matter ? "

Bhagavan : "No, I have no rights, and I have no troubles."

(75) WHAT DOES BHAGAVAN LIKE MOST ?

16th February, 1949

Several people that come to Bhagavan's presence become interested in Self-Enquiry and do Sadhana. Other people are not satisfied with mere looking around. They begin to say, "We will repair this," or "We will improve that." If they asked Bhagavan, he would say, "Yes, yes. That is good no doubt, but discuss the matter with the Office." If the office staff and those people agreed and placed the matter before Bhagavan, he would merely nod his head in approval, but if they did not agree and sought his opinion, he would say, "I do not know. Do as you think best." And as soon as they left, he would tell devotees, "Look. Without minding the purpose for which they come to the Asramam, they begin think-

ing of reforming the Asramam. It is enough if they reform themselves. Instead of that, they say, 'We will do this and we will do that.' What then? If all of them agree, then there is no trouble. But what they say, the office staff do not like and what the office say, they do not like. In between, what is it I can do? Added to that, they enquire what it is that Swami would like to be done. Do I want all these things?"

As an instance, one interesting thing happened here recently. A devotee came here and offered to supply a *Kavacham* (outer cover) for the Meru Prasthara Sri Chakram * made of copper with a silver plating over it. The Asramam authorities, however, wanted the cover to be made of pure silver. As they could not agree on this issue, they decided to refer it to Bhagavan and so came to the Hall. On behalf of the Asramam authorities, one of them approached Bhagavan and asked him with great reverence, "They say that they will make the outer cover for the Sri Chakra of copper plated with silver while we all feel it would be better for it to be made of pure silver. What is Bhagavan's advice in the matter?"

Bhagavan : "What have I to do with it? It is all right in whatever way it is done. Both of you come to an unanimous decision and do that which you have decided to be the best."

Enquirer : "Swami, we wish to know what Bhagavan would like us to do."

Bhagavan : "That is exactly what I am saying. I shall like that which you all agree to do in mutual consultation. If both of you give different opinions, what can I do?"

*A wheel representing the universe.

Both parties : "As we hold two different opinions, we are enquiring in order to find out what Bhagavan would like best."

Bhagavan : "Oh, I see. You want to know what Bhagavan would like best ! What Bhagavan likes best is to remain silent without doing anything. If people with different opinions give up their *Mowna* (silence) which is the embodiment of love, and come to me and say, 'We will do this,' and 'We will do that,' and enquire of me what I like better of the two, what can I say ? If you all agree upon a course of action and then ask me for my opinion, I would then say it is all right. But when you are of two opinions, why do you come to me and ask me which I like the better ? What I like is, to know who I am and to remain as I am with the knowledge that what is to happen will happen and what is not to happen will not happen. Is that not right ? Do you now understand what Bhagavan likes best ?" So saying Bhagavan assumed silence.

(76) RENTED HOUSE

18th February, 1949

A young man from Bangalore came here this morning for the first time and appeared anxious to ask something, but could not get an opportunity. At last at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon he approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, which is better for meditation — meditating with eyes closed or with eyes open ?"

Bhagavan (with a smile) : "Is that your doubt ? Do it in whichever way it appears easier for you."

Questioner : "If I keep my eyes open, all the outside things force themselves on my attention."

Bhagavan : "Will they not appear even if you close your eyes? We are sitting here. The mind sees ever so many things. It wanders to many places."

Questioner : "Yes, Swami. That is true. You should therefore show us a way by which we could avoid seeing all those places."

Bhagavan : "Everything comes out of ourselves. If we know our own Self and remain still as we are, there is nothing else. Only if we are fickle-minded, everything comes upon us."

The young man could not understand the significance of Bhagavan's words and so sat there absorbed in his own thoughts, downcast. Bhagavan's heart melted on seeing him and addressing a devotee seated nearby, said, "Look. If we are not existent, what is there outside to see? The scenery that is shown in a cinema is within the reel of the film. It is wound round and round within the reel wherein it is merged. It can be seen only if and when a hall is hired, a curtain is erected, a light is projected across the reel and the reel is unwound. If all that paraphernalia is removed and the reel is again wound up, the scenery on the screen ceases to exist. The picture and the scenery are all from the reel only. The world also is like that. This body is like a rented house. The Jiva gets into it and enacts a drama. The breath of life is like a watchman at the gate. During sleep, the Jiva goes to his original place and, on the body waking, comes back. Meanwhile, so long as the watchman, known as the breath of life, is there, no one else can get inside the body. Usually when dogs or thieves want to get into a house, they look this way and that and if they find that there

is a watchman, they run away saying there is someone at the gate. Otherwise they get in and do all sorts of damage. The house known as the body is also like that. Even if the Jiva is away, leaving the breath of life to watch the body, all living beings first come close to see if there is breath left in the body. If there is breath in the body, they say the owner is in and so go away. If there is no inhaling and exhaling of breath, they get in and do whatever they please. When the Jiva does not like the house, he leaves it and he takes away along with him the watchman also. He wanders from one house to another saying this is no good and that is no good until at last he feels disgusted and gives up houses and the life connected with them. He then realises that his own Self is the best of all and, with an intensity of feeling, enquires about his own Self, realises the truth and stays within his Self. When that happens, who is the Seer ? " said Bhagavan.

नष्टमानसोकृष्टयोगिनः ।
कृत्यमालि किं स्थितिं यतः ॥

— *Upadesa Saram.*

(77) ALL THĀMASIC ARTICLES ARE FORBIDDEN

20th February, 1949

Four days ago, we received a copy of 'Grihalakshmi', a monthly journal. Bhagavan was turning over the pages and laughing to himself. I thought there must be something amusing in it. While going out, Bhagavan sent me the Journal and said with a laugh, "The greatness of

garlic is described in it. Please read it." On bringing it home and reading it, I found that there was in it a description of how to cook garlic, how to make pickles out of it, how to make chutneys and in conclusion it was stated that there is nothing equal to it in its greatness and its benefit to the body. I could not help laughing when I read it. I then understood why Bhagavan was laughing while he was reading it. In the afternoon at 2-30 when I went to Bhagavan's presence, Bhagavan chuckled to himself on seeing me. No sooner did I step into the hall than he said, "Well, did you read about the greatness of garlic ? Was there not also a verse ?" I replied, "Yes, I have read it. There is a saying amongst us that the good which garlic can do, even a mother cannot do. That verse expresses the same sentiment."

Bhagavan : "Such a saying is prevalent in this part of the country also. People say it is very good for health. Really it is so. It removes rheumatism and gives strength to the body. For children it acts like Amrit (nectar). Garlic is also known as Amrit."

Devotee : "How did it get that name ?"

Bhagavan : "There is a curious story about it. As is well known, when gods (Devas) and demons (Rakshasas) churned the ocean, Amrit came out of it. When the Rakshasas were running away with the vessel containing Amrit, Devas appealed to Vishnu ; Vishnu came on to the scene in the shape of Mohini (Enchantress), and offered to resolve their quarrel by serving Amrit to them all. They agreed. While serving it to the gods first, it appeared that there might not be enough to go round for the demons and so one of the latter got into the line of the gods unobserved by Mohini and was swallowing the Amrit, when the Sun and the Moon noticed it and gave her the hint.

She threw the ladle, with which the Amrit was being served, at the demon in such a way as to cut off his head. The ladle became the *Chakra* (an invincible lethal weapon of Vishnu) and cut off his head, but as Amrit had already gone down his throat, the head became a Graha (planet) and has since been taking vengeance on the Sun and the Moon at the time of an eclipse. That is the story. Now, when the head of the demon was severed, the trunk fell down and, in the process, a few drops of Amrit fell on the ground, and it is said that those drops became the garlic plant. That is why it is said that garlic has some of the properties of Amrit. It is very good for the body. But since it also has the touch of the demon, it has *tāmasic* qualities too, which affect the mind, if eaten. Hence, it is forbidden for Sādhakas."

Devotee : "Are not horse-radish (mullangi) and drumsticks also forbidden for Sādhakas ? "

Bhagavan : Yes. Water-melon, horse-radish, drumsticks, onions and other similar vegetables are forbidden. The mind will be clear and pure depending on the sort of food one eats, *satvic* or otherwise. If one over-eats *sāmbar*, soup and boiled vegetables one will have to belch 'Ho Ho' and 'Ha Ha' and get worried over digesting it. If, however, one eats *satvic* food with only one side dish, one digests it easily and will be happy. Who pays attention to such advice ? "

Devotee : "Why do they not pay attention to such advice ? It is rather strange."

Bhagavan : "That is a fact. Nobody heeds such advice. Everyone says he must bring for Bhagavan Laddoos and Jilebis (sweetmeats) but no one says rice and pepper water are better for Bhagavan. They bring them

all for Swami. But why does Swami require all these things ? Dandapani Swami was here at one time. At that time the method of cooking was itself different. A big vessel used to be put on the fire. Whatever vegetables were received till noon used to be cut and put into it, boiled and Sambar made. There was no ladle even to stir and mix them. We used to take a piece of firewood, chisel it and use it for stirring those vegetables in the vessel. That preparation was the only side dish. When we mixed it with rice and ate, it used to be very tasty. The labour also was comparatively less. After cooking in the Asramam assumed large proportions, the cooks used to consult me in the early days about what to cook. I used to ask them, 'Do you have rice ?' and their reply was, 'yes'. 'Do you have water ' 'Yes'. 'Do you have salt ?' 'Yes.' 'Do you have pickles ?' 'Yes.' 'Buttermilk ?' 'Yes.' 'If so, what else do you want ?' I used to say. After that, they ceased to ask me and now they merely tell me, 'We will cook this and we will cook that,' and I say, 'Yes, yes.' I also advise them suitably. What do I lose ? I do not, however, give up my own custom, but mix all the side dishes into one before taking them. When several people gather together, they must have their way. Why should they suffer on my account ? "

(78) SOLITUDE

2nd March, 1949

It seems that an American lady by name Eleanor Pauline Noye came here once or twice a long time ago. A friend of hers, an elderly American woman, came here about ten days back, and told all people that she would stay for some time. The Kumbhābhishēkam being fixed

for the 17th instant, the place is now full of people. It could therefore be seen from her face that her peace was being disturbed.

As it is Tuesday today, I went round the hill and came to the Asramam a little later than usual. I did not therefore know what had happened in the morning in Bhagavan's presence. As soon as I went to the Asramam in the afternoon at 3 o'clock, prostrated before Bhagavan and sat down, the old American lady came in. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "The old lady over there wrote a letter and showed it to me this morning. It is stated therein that she would like to go to the Himalayas to move about with the animals there and remain in solitude. There are lots of people here now. She is perhaps unable to put up with the noise. Last night someone else also complained to me about the noise and I told him that he could not live in solitude even in the forest because, if there were men here there would be animals there. Why should anyone go to the Himalayas to live in solitude ? "

I asked, "Does the saying 'Ekākī Yatachithāthmā' (living in seclusion with the mind subdued) apply to the mind only ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. That is so.

योगी थुद्धीत सततमात्मानं रहसि स्थितः ।

एकाकि यतचित्तात्मा निराशीरपरिग्रहः ॥

— Gita, Chap. 6, Sloka 10.

(The Yogi who has subdued his mind and body and who is free from desire and bereft of possessions, living in seclusion all by himself alone, should constantly engage his mind in meditation.)

That means a Yogi must remain steadily in the secret place called Atman, realise that there is none other but his Self, and keep his mind in the Atman without his mind being deflected to any other matter. 'Viviktadeśasvitvam' also means the same thing.

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरूपभिचारणी ।
विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ॥

— Gita, Chap. 13, Sloka 10.

(Unflinching devotion to Me through exclusive attachment of the mind, living in secluded and sacred places, absence of pleasure in the company of men.)

"It means one has to remain in a state where nothing else but our own Self is existent, without attachment to the outer world and with exclusive devotion to the Self ; living in a place without thoughts, and unattached to worldly matters." Hence solitude refers to the mind and not to the body. If men are here, animals are there. Will they not be noisy and disturb peace ? A European, by name Haig, used to live in our Palakuthu.* About ten years ago, he went away to the Himalayas for the same reason. Recently we received a letter from him, saying he is coming back and that he will stay here alone till his death. Many people are like this. They go away saying they do not get peace here. They wander from place to place and come back here again."

* 'Palakuthu' is a small property with a temple and a tank adjacent to the Asramam to the west where Sadhaks live. A foreigner, by name Haig, used to live there and was always playing with the dogs and monkeys he was raising.

(79) DOSAIS

6th March, 1949

The temple of Droupadamma is about a furlong from here on the right hand side of the road going west from the Asramam. Recently the temple was renovated and Kumbhābhishēkam was performed there. Many people going to that temple would drop in at the Asramam. One afternoon, the attendants brought in sweetmeats, given in large quantities to the Asramam by devotees, and sought permission of Bhagavan to distribute them amongst the people in the hall as there were lots of them and it would be difficult to dispose of them otherwise. Just then an old woman arrived, feeling her way with the aid of a walking stick, and brought with her two or three dosais (pan-cakes) enclosed in a banyan-leaf bowl. As soon as she entered the hall, she went straight to Bhagavan and of her own accord said, "Swami, take these dosais. I am sorry, I had nothing better to bring." So saying, she tried to hand them over to Bhagavan direct. People nearby tried to prevent her from doing so by saying, "Please put them somewhere else." She got angry and said, "You had better keep quiet. Who are you to tell me? You have all come here yesterday or the day before. What do you know? Was it not I that got this platform built for Swami and made him sit here? You say I should not go near him. Enough, enough." All were taken aback by her authoritative attitude. Bhagavan stretched out his hand and accepted her offerings with the greatest kindness, saying, "Grandma, they are little children who do not know what is what. Please do not take it otherwise. With what flour did you prepare these dosais? Are none of your brother's

sons looking after you properly? How are you able to maintain yourself? Did you come walking, or in a cart? Thus enquiring about her welfare, Bhagavan began eating the dosais. They were not properly roasted but he ate them with great relish as if they were equal to nectar.

The old woman sat there overwhelmed with joy and unimaginable happiness. Bhagavan afterwards asked for some sweetmeats, took a little of each variety, said that was enough for him and instructed his attendants to distribute the rest amongst themselves and the people there, giving the rest of his share to the old woman. She got up, prostrated before Bhagavan, took her share of the sweetmeats as *Prasādam* and left saying, "What does it matter how others look after me, Swami? By your grace I am selling dosais and making a living out of the business. It is enough if I could pass the rest of my life thus."

After she left, the attendants asked, "Instead of eating those dosais which are not properly roasted, why not give them to us and eat the sweets?" Bhagavan said, "Oh! Those sweets, you think, will be much more tasty than these dosais? If you want, you eat all the sweets. These dosais are enough for me." The attendants could say no more.

Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "Poor old woman, what can she do? She brought what she had. When I was on the hill, she and her husband used to come to me. She used to bring me something to eat now and then. After her husband passed away, she lived with her brother. Even he passed away. As her brother's sons did not look after her properly and turned her out, she

has been staying somewhere else and has been living by selling *dosais*, it seems. It is she that had a platform constructed near Mother's Samadhi where I used to sit and had it covered by palm leaves. Till then, I used to sit under a tree. 'Aye ! Swami is sitting on the floor and is exposed to the sun !' So saying, she got the platform built. It is her brother's son that has repaired Droupadamma's temple. Having grown old, she does not come here often. See how she has come here all this distance, with great effort, helped by the walking stick !" He ate all the *dosais* without throwing away even a crumb.

On another occasion, when Bhagavan was living in Skandasramam, on a Deepavali day, devotees from the town came early morning and offered him sweetmeats such as Laddoos, Jilebis etc. It was about 8 a.m. The Asramites who had by then finished their oil bath, took the sweetmeats from the devotees, sent them away after giving them *Prasadam*, and were about to eat the sweetmeats, when another devotee, an old woman, came with a meal of millet boiled in water, and placed it before Bhagavan. She had lost her husband when quite young and was living in a Mutt with the help of her brother. She was giving gruel (*kanji*) to the poor and to Sadhus. Even when Bhagavan was living in Virupaksha cave, she was now and then bringing cooked ragi for him. One day he told her that ragi makes for chillness in the body, and it should therefore be mixed with some ground wheat like Suji. From that day onwards she prepared accordingly and was offering it to Bhagavan. On this festival day, therefore, she had prepared the food and brought it to the Asramam like all the others. Thereupon, Bhagavan took the food, put it in a wide-mouthed vessel, added water, dry ginger, salt and

lime juice and mixed it all together. Telling the people who were serving food that they might eat the Laddoos, Jilebis etc., he ate that mixture himself with great relish. The devotees said, "When there are nice preparations available why are you filling your stomach with ordinary food ? How unfair !" Bhagavan said, "What is unfair ? Like all the other items, this food also has been received. What am I to do ? Do you want me to throw it away ?" The devotees replied, "Why throw it away ? If all of us eat a little, it will be finished. Should Bhagavan alone eat it ?"

Bhagavan : "Well said ! But when there are such nice things available, who would care to eat this ? People would feel disgusted that on a festival day they had to eat such food. Why trouble others ?"

Devotee : "If not now, we can eat it in the afternoon. Why not keep it over ?"

Bhagavan : "Will it not be spoiled if kept over for sometime ? But the sweetmeats will not be spoiled, if kept over, and people will eat them without needing any persuasion. They will merely open the almirah and take them, while this, if kept over, will stay where it is. That is why I have decided to take it myself. When she has brought it with such great devotion, could we throw it away ?"

It seems Bhagavan ate the whole thing himself. God alone knows how often such things happened in the Asramam.

(80) GOLDEN-ARMED

8th March, 1949

Before I went to Bhagavan's presence this morning, Sundaresa Iyer appears to have handed over to Bhagavan a book which he was reading. Bhagavan was saying, "Look. '*Namo Hiranya Bāhave.*' (Salutation to the Golden-Armed) is in here," and Sundaresa Iyer was saying, "I was unable to know the finer points in it until Bhagavan explained them." Not knowing what it was all about, I asked.

Bhagavan (with a smile) : "You know, in my younger days, I got the name *Thangakkayi* (the Golden-Armed). In Namakam,* Rudra has already got the name '*Hiranya Bāhu*' (the Golden-Armed). Though this is being repeated daily here during the Vēda Pārāyana, no one has noticed it. Yesterday, that name came to my mind unaccountably and I told Sundaresa Iyer that the name was not a new one to me. He has now brought me that book."

Devotee : "How did Bhagavan get the name of *Thangakkayi* ? "

Bhagavan : "At all times and in all games, I used to win invariably ; were it wrestling or swimming, or even in doing domestic chores. That is why they called me *Thangakkayi*. If my aunt began preparing *appalams*, or such like, she would call me and ask me to put my hand on it first. She had great faith in me, because I used to do everything according to her wishes and never

* A Vedic Hymn.

told lies. I had to tell only one lie and that was when I came here."

Devotee : "What was that ? "

Bhagavan : "When my brother asked me where I was going, I told him that I was going to attend a special class in the school. After food, when I asked for the keys, I told my aunt the same thing. How could she know ? She believed me when I said that."

Devotee : "It means that for doing a great thing, sometimes a lie has to be told ! "

Bhagavan : "Yes. When it is for the welfare of the world and when the exigencies of the situation demand it, it has to be done. It can't be helped. Where is the question of telling a lie ? Some force makes one say so. So long as there is a purpose there is need of action. When there is no purpose, there is no action needed. In this latter case, we can avoid action in the same way as was done by the sage in 'The Sage and Hunter' story in the Yoga Vasishtam."

Devotee : "What is that story ? "

Bhagavan : "In a forest, a sage sat motionless and in silence. His eyes however were open. A hunter hit a deer and as it was running away, he began pursuing it when he saw the sage, and stopped. The deer had run in front of the sage, and hidden itself in a bush nearby. The hunter could not see it and so asked the sage 'Swami, my deer has come running this way. Please tell me where exactly it has gone.' The sage said he did not know. The hunter said, 'It ran in front of you. Your eyes were open. How could you say you do not know ? '

To that the sage replied, 'Oh my friend ! We are in the forest with universal equality. We do not have *Ahankāra*. Unless you have *Ahankāra*, you cannot do things in this world. That *Ahankāra* is the mind. That mind does all things. It also makes all the sense organs work. We certainly have no mind ; it disappeared long ago. We do not have the three states ; the states of waking, dream and deep sleep. We are always in the fourth or *Turiya* state. In that state nothing is seen by us. That being so, what can we say about your deer ?' Unable to understand what the sage was saying, the hunter went his way thinking they were all the words of a mad man."

(81) AVATAR (INCARNATION)

9th March, 1949

After hearing Bhagavan telling us that his nickname *Thangakkayi* was nothing new and that it was one of the names of Rudra in Sanskrit, namely, '*Hiranya Bahu*', one or two similar events that had occurred previously came to my mind and I am writing to you about them.

On the 18th of December last, when we had Bhagavan's birthday celebrations, Krishna Bhikshu wrote some verses in praise of Bhagavan. They were not read out on the Jayanti day. After the celebrations were over, I was asked to read them in Bhagavan's presence. They began with the idea, "Oh Ramana ! Let your fame be everlasting," and ended with the idea "Let your births be everlasting." When I read the last portion, Bhagavan with a laugh looked at Krishna Bhikshu and said, "Very

nice. Am I to continue to have births ? " Bhikshu said, " For our sake." Devaraja Mudaliar said, " How is it you have written like that ? Instead of asking him to be with us in this body, how could you pray to him to be born again and again ? Where is the question of another birth for Bhagavan ? " Turning towards Bhagavan, I said, " What is wrong in it ? It is said, ' To save the good people (*Parithrānāya Sadhoonām*) ' ". As I was saying so, Bhagavan took up the thread of the conversation and said, " Yes. That is true."

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थ्य संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

— Gita, Chap. IV, Sloka 8.

(For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers and for establishing Dharma (righteousness) on a firm footing I am born from age to age.)

" So I should continue to go on having re-births. Very good."

" How could that be avoided ? " I said. Bhagavan just nodded his head and was silent.

A devotee, Dr. Syed, who has been here for a long time doing Sadhana, had asked Bhagavan a number of questions and got suitable replies. Even so, he was not able to have any spiritual experiences, and so one day he came to Bhagavan in great grief and said, " Bhagavan, even though you have shown me all possible ways of Sadhana, I am not able to gain strength in spiritual experience. You must give me that strength ; otherwise

how can I get that strength ? " Bhagavan said, " You must get it by Sadhana only. Who can help you in the matter ? "

Dr. Syed : " Who else, Bhagavan ? I must have Bhagavan as my Guru for however many births I may have and he alone should give me salvation. I do not want another Guru any time, any Yuga ; it is enough if you give me the promise that you will help me to attain salvation."

Bhagavan appeared to be visibly affected. He looked at him (Dr. Syed) kindly, smiled, placed his hand on his own cheek in his characteristic pose, leaned against the pillow and remained silent.

" What, Bhagavan ? " said Dr. Syed again. Bhagavan merely nodded his head and kept quiet. The devotee took it to be his blessings and was satisfied.

(82) INAUGURATION OF MOTHER'S TEMPLE

25th March, 1949

The Vaidiks (Priests) who were invited by the Asramam obtained the permission of Bhagavan early morning on Sunday the 13th instant to perform the Chandi Hōmam and the worship of Navakanyakās. On Monday, the 14th which was the Full Moon day, thousands of people gathered at the Asramam as it was announced that the preliminaries for the Kumbhābhishēkam, such as Pūja of Vigneswara, would begin after the night meal. The Asramam presented the appearance of Kailās (Heaven) with brilliant electric lights every-

where. Pictures of Siva's dance poses were tied around the shed of the Vaidiks and the Pandits. The roads were crowded with shops on either side. The Pandal was decorated with strings of green leaves ; and the Asramam was resounding with instrumental music.

It was past 8 p.m. The music stopped. The chanting of the Vēdas could be heard from the side of the cow-shed. Wondering what it was, I looked that side and saw the Vaidiks following Bhagavan from the side of the cow-shed to the temple where pūja had already begun. After Bhagavan came and sat down on the sofa, another batch of Vaidiks chanting Vēdas, brought in Sri Sankarāchārya of Pūri who had come here two days earlier ; they seated him on a special sofa by the side of Sri Bhagavan.

After that, hundreds of Brahmins sat at a distance from Bhagavan in rows and began filling the whole atmosphere with the music of the chanting of the Vēdic Hymns. It is no exaggeration to say that it exceeded the grandeur of even the durbar of Brahma. The radiant face of Bhagavan, who was seated under the starry sky was radiating a cool lustre all around. People were spell-bound at the sight. It appeared as if the lustrous Linga of Lord Arunachala himself had assumed that shape.

The son of the Sarvādhikāri, T. N. Venkataraman, came there accompanied by his wife and with Brahmins walking in front in a procession. The fruits and flowers that were brought with them were placed at the feet of Bhagavan. Venkataraman then prostrated before Bhagavan and after obtaining the permission of Bhagavan to begin the ceremonies sat on a wooden seat. After that, Vaidyanatha Stapathi — the Sculptor — came there with

his attendants and prostrated before Bhagavan. The Stāpathi Pūja had then to be performed after the pūja of the Dharmakarthaś. So he obtained Bhagavan's permission and went away. Subsequently, the Vaidiks and the Ashramites came one after another, obtained Bhagavan's permission and began the ceremonies with the worship of Ganapati. On completion of the worship, Venkataraman and his wife prostrated before Bhagavan and left.

Soon after that, Bhagavan got up with the 'Pūrnakalasam' (a pot full of water) and, with a procession of Brahmins chanting Vēdic Hymns, he came to the hall constructed as a *Mukhamandapam* (raised platform in front of the new temple), opened the doors leading into the temple as a symbol of the opening of the temple. Thereafter he went straight to the Samādhi where the Linga is to be installed as also *Mēruprasthāra Chakra*, touched them, examined them, went round the temple examining everything and then came to the hall in the front portion of the temple. .

At that place a specially carved stone sofa had been placed for seating Bhagavan. In the centre of the sofa there was a lotus, in the back the 'Pranavam' ('Om') and on either side two lions. On the four legs of the seat there were carvings representing some of the Avatarās. All of them were pointed with a golden hue. The Asramam authorities wanted to seat Bhagavan on that stone sofa not on that day but on the day of the 'Kumbhbhishēka'. That was why there was no bedspread on the sofa. All expected Bhagavan to examine it merely and come away but he sat on the sofa unexpectedly. All were astonished. They prostrated before him. After a

while Bhagavan started from there, and went into the shed erected for Sri Chakra Yāga, and there touched all the vessels. At about 10 a.m., he came back to his usual place in the Golden Jubilee Hall.

After 2 a.m., in the night *Kalākarshnam* and *Ghatasthāpanam* were performed. The Chāndi Yāga was begun and was performed according to Sāstric rites in the sheds of the Vaidiks. Similar rituals were performed in the Āgama sheds also. Thus in all the several places the respective gods were invoked, the vessels with sacrificial waters were installed and the Hōmas were begun. Besides the Hōmas, four Vēdas were being chanted by four different sets of people. The music of the Vēdas was pleasing to the ear and created an atmosphere of serenity, reminding one of the atmosphere similar to that which prevailed in the ancient Ashrams. Besides these, there was a recital of the 'Dēvi Bhāgavatam' also.

On the second day, Hōmas were performed in the same manner. Between 7 and 10 in the morning, and between 5 and 10 in the evening, Yāga Pūja was performed. The same morning, the oxen in the Gōsāla (cow-shed) were brought to the temple where the pūjas were being performed, their horns were decorated with turmeric powder, kumkum and flower garlands and a Linga was tied between the horns of one of them. After the Linga had dangled for a while between the horns as a part of the ritual the oxen were sent back and the Linga was taken in a procession to the temple to the accompaniment of instrumental music and the chanting of the Vēdas. After Pradakshina, the Linga was taken inside. Subsequently the idols of Yōgāmba, Vignēswara and Kartikeya were taken into the temple in the same manner.

On the night of the second day between 10-30 p.m. and midnight, the Mēruprasthāra Sri Chakra was placed behind the Linga by Bhagavan to the accompaniment of the chanting of Vēdas. After that, devotees chanted the appropriate Mantras and placed the Mēruchakra in its proper place where the nine gems were inset. There was another golden Sri Chakra which was to be placed under the Linga and sealed with gold. As that would cause delay, at the request of the devotees, Bhagavan merely touched it and came back to his original seat. The remaining idols were installed by others subsequently.

During the early morning of the third day, the Kalākarshana ceremony was performed. Thereafter the various idols were fixed in their respective places which were studded with Navaratnas (nine gems). The stone sofa which was specially prepared for Bhagavan referred to earlier was likewise studded with nine gems.

The most important of all the ceremonies was performed on the fourth day. Hearing the instrumental music as early as 2 a.m., I got up and went to the Asramam and found the whole place full of people sleeping on the floor. There was no space even to walk along. As the music was played at different places, the people who were asleep woke up slowly. As all the Yāgas had been performed for three nights and were ended, the other rituals like *Suvāsini Pūja*, *Sparsāhuti* and *Pūrnāhuti* were performed. On the morning itself the Kalasas (water pots) were placed in the temple with appropriate rituals. Subsequently the priests carried on their heads the *Pūrnakalasam* with chanting of Mantras, went round Bhagavan and with his permission climbed up the summit of the temple. Bhagavan sat on the sofa and all the devotees prostrated before him. After that

was done he was taken into the shed where the Yāga was performed, was made to sit on a chair and the tower of the temple was sanctified with the sprinkling of holy water. Thereafter Bhagavan was brought to the interior Kalasa of the temple and was made to sit on a bench before the Nandi and then *Abhishēkam* was done to *Mēruprasthāra* and to the Māthrubhūtēswara Linga.

After this Mahākumbhbhishēkam, Bhagavan resumed his seat. Niranjanānanda Swāmi, who was responsible for all the festivities, was garlanded and honoured in the presence of Bhagavan. In the evening at 4, the Ayurvedic Doctor, Bangalore Ramachandra Rao gave a lecture in the presence of Bhagavan about the utility of Kumbhbhishēkams, how the twigs used in the Hōma contain rare medicines and how when they were burnt with Mantras all diseases of the lungs get cured by the inhaling of the fumes. That is why, he said, elders have ordained on us to perform the Yāgas.

In the evening at 5-30, Dr. K. Vijayaraghavan gave a music recital. In the night after 8 p.m., Mahābhishēkam was performed. A troupe of Thiruppugal singers, performed Bhajan all the four days in the presence of Bhagavan and also at the Yāgasālas. There was no limit to poor feeding on all the three days. Special arrangements were made with the help of the police and volunteers for poor feeding. Bhagavan went round with his attendants during the feeding to supervise the arrangements. Cinema people took a film of all the festivities. The festivities came to a close with the usual Mantras. As the work in the hall in the front of the temple was not over, Bhagavan came back to the Golden Jubilee Hall the same night.

(83) WORSHIP OF THE SANDALS

26th March, 1949

The devotion to duty of those who were responsible for the enthusiasm with which they made all the arrangements for the festivities connected with the Kumbhābhishēkam is indeed commendable. The Asramites, the police, the scouts from various schools, the volunteers and hundreds of devotees made the function a grand success by working day and night. With a view to honour some of the important ones amongst them, the Sarvādhikāri, Sri Niranjanānanda Swāmi, began giving gifts to the Vaidiks, to the Pandits, to the Asramites and other devotees. The chief among them was Vaidyanātha Stapathi, the sculptor of the temple. A gold medal with Bhagavān's picture thereon was given to him.

In the afternoon of the 19th instant, at 3, Sri Niranjanānanda Swāmi invited the Stapathi to come into the presence of Bhagavān, when Bhagavan himself presented him with the medal. The Stapathi, full of devotion, prostrated before Bhagavān and said, "I had the great fortune of doing this service in Bhagavan's presence. Bhagavān will bless us to the effect that this medal will be worshipped as our family god and as our saviour". Bhagavān blessed him with a look of endearment.

There was another event on the morning of the 20th instant. Sri Giddaluri Sāmbasiva Rao decided to worship the feet of Sri Niranjanānanda Swāmi in the front hall of Mathrubhuteswara temple. He brought new ochre robes and all the materials required for *Pādā Pūja* and brought Sri Bhagavān to the

hall and made him sit on the sofa, after telling him (Bhagavān) of his intentions. He then prevailed upon Niranjanānanda Swāmi to come, brought him there with a number of Brahmins and made him sit on a dais in the centre of the hall. Overwhelmed with feelings of humility, Niranjanānanda Swāmi said, "So you all want to catch me napping. Enough of your devotion. I will not agree to this worship. Pāda Pūja is only for those who do not have the sense of ego. It is not for others. I am not worthy of it." So saying, he got down and squatted on the floor. Sāmbasiva Rao however would not allow him to go, and began pressing him. Swāmi was in a dilemma. In those embarrassing circumstances, his face suddenly lit up. Something occurred to him. With a tremulous voice, he said, looking at the students of the Pātasāla, "So it means, you will not leave me alone ; Bhagavān's sandals are near that Linga ; bring them ; do Pūja to them."

A devotee had brought those sandals with silver plating before the Kumbhābhishēkam and had given them to the Asramam. They were touched by Bhagavān's feet and placed near the Linga to be worshipped. In accordance with the orders of the Sarvādhikāri, the Brahmin boys brought those sandals in a plate and placed them before the Sarvādhikāri. After Sāmbasiva Rao had done Abhishēkam, Swāmi cleaned them with a cloth and replaced them on the plate with great reverence. After the usual Pūja was performed, the ochre clothes were placed on the sandals and the plate containing them was handed over to Niranjanānanda Swāmi who received it, touched the sandals with his eyes and accepted the clothes as a *Prasādam*. While doing so, he said, "Look. I have accepted the Pūja of the sandals this time because of your

pressing request. This should never be done by anybody else. Things of this nature should never be done in the presence of Bhagavān".

From the day of the Kumbhābhishēkam, *Abhishekas* according to *Mahanyāsa* are being performed every day regularly. On Monday the 2nd of May, corresponding to Vaishākha Sudha Chathurthi, *Mandalābhishēkam* will be performed.

It is no exaggeration to say that when the great ceremony is performed in the presence of Bhagavān who is the embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ānanda, one is reminded of the Rājasūya Yāga of Yudhishtira. Even though so very many things were being done in his presence, Bhagavān was seeing them and listening to them only as a witness (*Sākshi*) merely saying, "Yes, yes." He was like Sadāsiva seated on the sofa looking with compassion at all those who came to him.

(84) THE STORY OF THE TEN BRAHMINS

28th March, 1949

I went to Bhagavān's presence rather late this afternoon. When I looked at the clock it was 3-30. Bhagavān was replying with a smile to a question about Ātmānandam asked by a new arrival who sat close to him, "Please find out first who you are. If you know that, everything is Ānandam (Bliss). In fact your 'Self' is itself 'Anandam.' "

Taking up the thread of the conversation, one Asramite said, "When I requested you to bless me so that I

could always be in Ānandam, you said, Ānandam is your nature ; that is your Self ; that is Moksha.' " Bhagavān replied with a smile, " Yes, yes." So saying, he looked at Dr. Srinivasa Rao who was there and said, " What do you say, doctor ? We say that a doctor should be called and he should give medicine only if there is sickness. Otherwise why is he required ? Yesterday the health was good. Today there is a headache. As there is a headache, you say medicine is required. Why ? Just to see that it goes off and you remain natural. It is the same thing with Ānanda ; otherwise why do you yearn for it ? "

The doctor said, " Bhagavān always says that these things come on because of the mind and that they will disappear if you try to get rid of them yourself. In Vāsishtam also it is stated that all these come upon a person by the desires of the mind and it is the mind that creates them all. But how is that possible, Bhagavān ? "

" How, you say. Is this not stated in the story about the ten Brahmins ? That story is also in the Vasishtam," said Bhagavān.

" Will you kindly tell us what that story is ? " asked another devotee.

Bhagavān thereupon cheerfully began telling us the story.

" Once upon a time Brahma, the Creator, after performing his duties the whole day, went to sleep at night-fall. When the night was over, he woke up. After completing his morning ablutions, he looked at the sky before beginning his day's work of creation, when he saw that

there were several other worlds. His work of creation was being performed properly and so there was no justification for the other worlds to come into existence. ‘What ! The worlds that should remain dormant until I created them, have come into existence ! How have these worlds come into existence ?’ Greatly surprised at this, with the power of his mind he summoned one of the suns in those worlds and asked, ‘Sir, how have these worlds come into existence ?’

“The sun replied, ‘Oh, my Lord, you are the Brahma. What is there that you do not know ? Even so, if you want to hear from me, I will tell you.’ So saying, he began relating as follows : ‘Swāmi, a Brahmin, living in a city under Mount Kailās with his wife, prayed to Paramēswara for children as he had none, and ultimately begot ten children. The children in due course grew up and studied all Sāstras. After some time, the parents passed away. The boys were filled with grief. They had no near relatives and consequently could not continue to live in that house. They climbed Mount Kailās and decided to do *Tapas* there. They then began considering what exactly they should do to get rid of their sorrows. At first they thought wealth would give them happiness but dismissed the idea as there would always be wealthier people than themselves. It would be the same thing with regard to kingship or even the Lordship of Mahendra, They therefore felt that there was no fulfilment in any of those things. Finally the eldest amongst them said, ‘He who creates all these is Brahma and so Brahma is the highest of them all.’ They all felt happy at the suggestion and said, ‘What is the way to achieve Brahma-hood (Brahmatvam) ?’ After thinking for a while, the eldest said, ‘It is not so difficult. Mind

is the basic cause of everything. So let us all sit in a lonely place and concentrate the mind on attaining Brahmatvam, giving up thoughts on all other matters including the body. Continuously feel that you are seated on a lotus ; that you are lustrous; and that you are creating this world and destroying it. I will also do likewise.' All of them felt happy at the idea, 'I am the Brahma with four faces'. The idea became firmly fixed in their minds and they forgot completely about their bodies. Subsequently those bodies fell off like dry leaves from a tree. On account of the intensity of their desires, ten worlds have come into existence as all the ten of them have become Brahmās. The force of their desires is now stationary in the *Chit Ākāsa*. I am the sun of one of the ten worlds.' So saying, the sun went back to his original place. This is the story of the ten Brahmās. It is given in full detail in *Vāsishtham* under the heading 'Naveena Srishti', " said Bhagavan.

"That means that if one consistently desires to be Ānanda, that Ānanda comes and remains permanently ; is that so ?" asked that questioner.

"Yes. If that desire becomes strong, it will remain so but then there should be no other idea in the mind." So saying Bhagavān resumed silence.

(85) THE BANYAN TREE

10th April, 1949

In the third edition of the 'Ramana Leela', which is just out, several matters which were in the earlier editions have been omitted and some were added. Bhagavān looked into the book and said that there were some

factual errors. I told Krishna Bhikshu about it and suggested that he should get them corrected in Bhagavān's presence, so that the corrections could be incorporated in the next edition. He had come here for the Kumbhābhishēkam and was here till recently. On the 29th ultimo he obtained the permission from the office to read the book in Bhagavān's presence and make the required corrections. Accordingly he began to read it from 2-30 p.m. on the 31st ultimo. As Bhagavān was giving him instructions about the various corrections to be made and was incidentally narrating several incidents, only half the work could be completed by the 2nd instant. The tumour that had grown on Bhagavan's arm was operated on the 3rd instant, and so the reading of the book was stopped that day. The doctors and the Asramam authorities permitted the reading of the book on the 3rd day and so it was resumed and completed in two days. Krishna Bhikshu left this place afterwards.

Even though he had left, discussions relating to the book were continued subsequently in Bhagavān's presence. Yesterday afternoon a devotee said that between the Telugu and the English versions of the biography there were several discrepancies. Bhagavān remarked, "Yes, that is so. Krishna Bhikshu has made several alterations as he has been coming here every now and then and checking up. Narasimhayya, who had written the English version and Suddhānanda Bhārati, who had written the Tamil version, have not come here since writing them."

I said, "The incident regarding the bees and the banyan leaf has been written in 'Ramana Leela' differently. I remember Bhagavān telling us that he had gone

up the hill only after seeing the leaf and it was only then that the insects stung him."

"Yes, yes. One morning unintentionally I came down the hill from the Virūpāksha cave and was going round the hill, when it occurred to me that I should go up the hill by a short cut between Panchamukha temple and Pachayamma temple. It was all a big forest. While I was feeling my way, a big banyan leaf drifted across my path. That one leaf was as big as the leaf we stitch together with several banyan leaves to eat food on. When I saw that leaf I was reminded of the Sloka in the Arunāchala Purānam where there was a description of the banyan tree under which Arunagiri Yogi was living."

"What is that Sloka?" asked one devotee. Bhagavān thereupon recited it as follows:

अस्त्युतरेसिन् शिखरे दृश्यते वटभूरुहः ।

सिद्धवेषस्सदैवास्ते यस्य मूले महेश्वरः ॥

यस्यच्छायाति महती सर्वदा पण्डलाकृतिः ।

लक्ष्यते विस्योपत्रैः सर्वदा देव मानवैः ॥

"As soon as I was reminded of that Sloka, I thought that that leaf must be from that banyan tree and so felt that I could see that tree if I went along the direction from which the leaf came. I started climbing up further and soon saw a tree on an elevated spot. As I was going along to it, my thigh hit against a bush. On account of the disturbance, the bees in the bush came out and began stinging me. I thereupon thought that I had committed an offence and that this was the punish-

ment. So thinking, I sood still. The bees did not sting me at any other place than the one that touched the bush. They bit me to their fullest satisfaction. After they left me, I began walking. Curiously enough I forgot all about the banyan tree and wanted to reach the place of the seven springs. But there were three big streams in between which were very deep. The thigh too had swollen and was paining. I somehow crossed the three streams, and reached the seven springs. From there I began to descend the hill and reached the cave of Jataswāmi by the evening. Till then I had no food, nothing whatsoever. There they gave me a tumblerful of milk which I drank and then took a little fruit. After some time I went to the Virūpāksha cave and stayed there for that night. The leg got still more swollen. Jataswāmi and others did not notice it, but Palaniswāmi saw it and said, ‘What is it ?’ and I told him all that had happened. Next day, he applied some gingelly oil to it. When he smeared it with the oil, he found that in every place I was stung, there was a spike as strong as a wire nail. With great effort he took out every one of them and gave some treatment. The swelling subsided after two or three days.”

“Did not Bhagavān make any effort afterwards to trace the place where the banyan tree was ?” I asked.

“No. That thought never came to my mind again,” replied Bhagavān.

I said, “It seems that some time later, Venkata-rāmayya, Muruganār, Kunjuswāmi and others went in search of the place and were disappointed.”

“Yes, yes. That was a tamasha. You were also here at that time and you have heard about it, haven’t you ?” questioned Bhagavān.

"I did hear about it but I do not know the details," I said.

"If that is so, you had better ask any one of them. They would tell you. It would be good if the people who had experienced those troubles told you about them," said Bhagavān.

(86) AASURA VĀSANA

13th April, 1949

Sri Rāma Yogi came here about a week back. Sitting before Bhagavān this morning he said, "Bhagavān, some people say, 'We have become Jnanis. We are in the Jeevanmukta state.' They do not, however, sit quietly even for a minute but will always be wandering. How can they be Jeevanmuktas?"

"What of that?" said Bhagavān. "Are not Nārada and others Jeevanmuktas? What is wrong with the Jeevanmukta state if one goes about the world? All things happen according to one's *Prarabda*."

"That is not it, Bhagavān. People like Nārada went round the world singing celestial songs for the benefit of the world after they became Jeevanmuktas. These people are not like that. They mix in all worldly affairs full of *Raga* and *Dvesha* (desires and aversions) and claim to be Jnānis and Jeevanmuktas. How can that be?" said that devotee.

"That is what you ask, is it?" said Bhagavān. "I see. That is all known as *Aasura Vāsanā* (demoniac tendencies). It has been humorously described in 'Vāsu-

deva Mananam'. Wait. I will have it read." So saying, Bhagavān asked Venkataratnam to bring a copy of Vāsu-deva Mananam. Taking the chapter on *Aasura Vāsana* and asking him to read it, Bhagavān said, "Look. Please note that you must read it without laughing. You should also read it aloud without mumbling to yourself. There you are. You have already started laughing. Read without laughing."

He somehow controlled his laughter and began reading. I will only write down the summary. "For a Sadhak the obstacles relating to *Aasura Vāsana* exhibit themselves frequently though he feels that he has got rid of them. For instance, he would say, 'You are a fallen Yōgi. Useless fellow. Is this the way to perform rituals ? There is no doubt about it. Even the Guru who taught you these rituals is also a *Brashta* (a fallen person). Don't come to my presence from tomorrow. Get away.'

"' You fellow ! Prostrate before me and save yourself. Take the holy waters from our lotus feet and save yourself. What other Vēdantic enquiries are required than serving us ? All your desires will be fulfilled if you worship us. Do not serve any one else but us. You fellow, if you do not give all that you have to one of the people here, do not come to us. Look ! One person never cared for us. We therefore said that he should live no longer. He was thereupon reduced to ashes. In the same manner another person lost all his wealth and still another fellow received *Upadēsa* from us and never cared for us and therefore got reduced to ashes subsequently. Who could know about our greatness except great people like ourselves ? We know the past, the present and the future. We protect the world at all times. We earned

a good deal of money and gave it away in charity. We know the desires that are in the minds of each and every individual. Those desires come and stand before us. We know when a particular person is to get into trouble and when another person is to get huge wealth. In this manner we surely get to know future happenings. I am a Siddha ; I am Īswara. Who is there higher than me ? All must serve me. It is only through me that persons could get their desires fulfilled. If they do not try to get their desires fulfilled through us, they will fall into the well of sin. They will soon be guilty of sinning against the Guru. Take care'."

With some more things like this the chapter concludes with the remarks : "Feelings like *Rāga* and *Dvēsha* are the causes of retarding the progress of the spiritual aspirant and so those who are anxious to attain Mōksha, must practise 'Self Enquiry' and give up those feelings. If any one observes practices like *Sravana*, *Manana*, etc. he may not gain Mōksha during his life time, but those practices will not go waste. He will get into *Uttamalōka* (higher life) through that, attain Chitta Suddhi and will be born as a *Brahmanishta* and, by repeated practice of *Sravana*, *Manana* and the like, attain Jnānam in due course."

After Venkataratnam had finished reading this chapter, Bhagavān looked at the devotee who had originally asked the question and said with a laugh, "Now, sir. You have heard everything, have you not ?" The devotee said, "Yes. I have heard. But then, it has been stated that when there are obstacles, a person will not attain Mōksha even if he practises *Sravana*, *Manana* etc. It has also been stated that those practices will not go

waste and will lead him to higher life. But what happens if one does not practise *Sravana*, *Manana*, etc. but continues one's malpractices ? ”

“ That will be the cause of his ruin. Have you not heard of Harsha who lost his empire and remained as Ajagara (boa constrictor) for ten-thousand years ? ” replied Bhagavan.

87. TULYA NINDA STUTIHI

(He who takes praise and reproach alike)

14th April, 1949

Sometime in the month of June or July, 1945, a European youth came here from Nilagiri. When he came it was 7-30 a.m. Bhagavan had by then gone for taking light refreshments. Handing over to the attendants in the hall a basket of fruit which he had brought with him, the youth went hurriedly into the dining hall. While doing so, his purse fell out. He did not notice it. An old man, a Reddiar from Anantapur, who observed the whole thing thought of telling that youth about it on his return. Meanwhile, a Vaishnavite with a ‘*Nāmam*’* came and picked up the purse. The old man saw that and told him that it belonged to the European. The Vaishnavite said, “ I am his representative. He has asked me to bring it. I will give it to him only.” So saying he disarmed the suspicion of the old man, went into the dining hall and disappeared from there unnoticed.

* A caste-mark on the forehead worn by Vaishnavaites.

When the European youth returned, he told all the people there about the loss of his purse. The old man told him about the trick played by the man with the '*Nāmam*'. The people there searched for the trickster all over the place, but to no purpose. It seems there were ten rupees in that purse. All this happened before I went to the Asramam at 7-45 a.m. After hearing the whole story from the old Reddiar I went into the hall when Bhagavan said with a smile, "Look. This is the gentleman who gave a present of ten rupees to that great Vaishnavite." A gentleman in the hall remarked, "The person who found the purse will feel happy in the thought that Bhagavan himself gave it to him." Bhagavan remarked, "I see. The person who lost the purse will also feel that it was Bhagavan who stole it."

About that time, some devotees came to the Asramam from a distant place. After finishing their bath they came to Bhagavan's presence with fruit and various sweetmeats in a big plate, prostrated before him, and sat down. After a while, they all got up saying that they would go to Arunāchala temple and come back. One of them with folded hands said, "Swāmi, I prayed to Bhagavan when I started some work. That work was successful. It was Bhagavan's grace that was responsible for my success." After praising Bhagavan thus for a long time he went away to the temple along with the others. As soon as he left, Bhagavan looked at us and said with a smile, "It seems he thought of something and it became a success. That was because of his past Karma. He keeps saying that it was all due to Bhagavan's grace. Another person takes up some work but does not succeed because of his Karma. He will decry Bhagavan saying that Bhagavan had not helped

him at all. Reproach comes on me the same way as praise and I have to accept both."

Another interesting event occurred only yesterday. A letter in English was received by post alleging several things against Bhagavan and decrying him. The Asramam authorities showed it to Bhagavan in the afternoon while he was taking rest. At 3 p.m., as soon as Muruganār, Viśwanātha Brahmachāri and other devotees came in, Bhagavan began telling them about the letter and then said, looking at Venkataratnam, "Please go to the office and get that letter. One of the people here will read it so that all the others can hear it." Venkataratnam hesitated to go as he felt that it was all unnecessary. Thereupon Bhagavan said, "Why do you say it is unnecessary? You always speak highly of me, saying 'Swāmi, Swāmi.' You will now know all about my Swāmitvam when you read that letter." Venkataratnam did not move. Looking at him, Bhagavan again said, "Why? Why do you hesitate? When anybody writes praising Bhagavan, you get the letter, and read it aloud, so that all can hear. Why don't you get this one?" So saying, Bhagavan looked at us and said, "Look how he behaves. When anyone writes saying Bhagavan is great, he has it read out. But he does not want this letter to be read out. Why?"

Muruganār said, "Let us leave it at that. Why read it?"

"Oho! So that is it," said Bhagavan. "All of you have already conspired amongst yourselves. If that is so, why should I bother about it?" So saying, with a tolerant smile, Bhagavan resumed silence. We all felt that it was nothing when compared with the patience with which he put up with the attempts to decry him.

by Mallaswāmy, Jataswāmi and others, who could not with equanimity bear the great fame that Bhagavan was getting. This is a good illustration of the Slokas 18 and 19 in the 12th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita :

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥

(He who is alike to friend and foe, and likewise to honour and ignominy, who is alike to heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc., is free from attachment).

Chapter 12, Sloka 18.

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिमैंनी संतुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान्मे प्रियो नरः ॥

(He who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to contemplation and is content with whatever comes unasked for, without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of devotion to me, that man is dear to me).

Chapter 12, Sloka 19.

88. THE UNDERGROUND LINGA

(Pāthāla Linga)

10th May, 1949

It has been stated in the biography of Sri Bhagavan that in the early days of his arrival he used to sit near the underground Linga in the Thousand-pillared Mandapam of Arunāchalēswara Temple and that he was so completely absorbed within himself that he was quite

unconscious of the insects which used to bite him until blood came out. You remember we had seen that cellar and the Linga. They have long been in a dilapidated state. Recently Mrs. Talayarkhan decided to get it repaired and convert it into a fine shrine. She collected some money and entrusted the work to the contractors Messrs. Tarapore & Co. It was ready before the Kumbhābhishēkam of the Māthrubhūtēswara Temple. Even so, the opening ceremony was put off until the Kumbhābhishēkam was over.

The Kumbhābhishēkam being over, Mrs. Talayarkhan arranged for the opening of the Pāthāla Linga Shrine by the Governor-General, Sri C. Rājagōpālāchāri, at 8-30 a.m. on the 4th instant and sent out invitations to all people. Before the arrival of the Governor-General with all his paraphernalia, several batches of Reserve Police came here. The roads were repaired and decorated with national flags. The Thousand-pillared Mandapam was cleaned and white-washed. Spectators came from all places. The whole town was full of bustle and noise. Knowing that with the Governor-General, the Madras Governor, the Mahārāja of Bhavnagar and his wife, would also come for the occasion and that they would visit the Asramam for a Darshan of Bhagavan, the Municipal authorities and the police made all the required arrangements at the Asramam also.

The Governor-General went to the temple straight from the railway station at the appointed hour, performed the opening ceremony, spoke in terms of praise about Sri Bhagavan and went away, sending a message to Bhagavan that he could not visit the Asramam owing to some urgent work. As soon as he left, all the people assembled at the temple came here. By 10-30 a.m., the

Bhavnagar royal couple came into Bhagavan's presence, prostrated before him with great devotion, spoke in praise of Bhagavan, stayed for half-an-hour, received *Prasādam*, took leave and went away.

One of the devotees who had witnessed all the festivities when the shrine was declared open, addressing Bhagavan, said, "Nowhere do we find cellars in Thousand-pillared mandapams. What can be the reason for the existence of a cellar here ?" Bhagavan replied, "No, they are usually not in existence anywhere. The reason for its existence here is because some important person passed away, and his body was buried there and a Linga was installed thereon. As the Linga was there much before the construction of the Thousand-pillared Mandapam it was not disturbed but was left as it was. The remaining portion of the ground was raised and the Mandapam was erected. That is why the Linga is underneath the Mandapam which remains like a cave. Later on, steps leading to the place were constructed. When I was staying there, it was full of dust. Excepting the elephant on the Mandapam and myself in the cellar, no one else used to be there." We were all surprised at hearing the circumstances under which the cellar came into existence.

Bhagavan had told us on several occasions that there were several inscriptions on the walls stating that the Andhra Emperor, Krishnadevarāya, constructed the Mandapam and that it was also stated in those inscriptions that the Emperor did several other similar good deeds. After hearing this, Dr. Anantanārāyana Rao went there with some devotees, got the inscriptions in Prākrit language copied and published them in one of his books. After my return from Tiruchuli in June 1944, Bhagavan

related to me several similar anecdotes. I will write to you about them some other time when I have leisure.

89. THE MEDICINE ITSELF HAS ARRIVED

12th May, 1949

About a week back, a letter was received by post from Mādhavi Amma. In it was written as follows :

"I hear that Bhagavan is growing weaker and weaker. May I pray that you will take tomato juice or orange juice ? "

Reading the letter and telling us about it, Bhagavan said, "What a suggestion ! She is a rich lady. She can afford to take anything she likes. How can I do that ? Even so, how strong and healthy is she by eating them all ? She always complains of this pain and that pain. And her height is just about one foot ! Why does she not herself take all those drinks ? "

The same evening, Ayurvedic Doctor Rāmachandra Rao came here from Bangalore. Noticing his arrival at the hall, Bhagavan said to people near him, "Look ! Rāmachandra Rao is coming in. He must have brought some medicines with him. When I see him I do not feel that I am seeing a human being. I feel that I am seeing the medicines themselves." In the meanwhile, Rāmachandra Rao came in, placed before Bhagavan a big bottle of medicine and prostrated. No sooner did he get up, than Bhagavan said with a laugh, "Did I not tell you all that the medicine itself has arrived ? " With folded hands and in a prayerful attitude, Rāmachandra Rao said,

"It is not a medicine, Bhagavan. It is an *Arishtam* (a distilled mixture ; a tonic). Bhagavan's body is very much emaciated. If you take this tonic it will give you strength. Please use it."

Bhagavan said, "That is all right. If, by taking this, a person gets sturdy, why do you not try it on yourself ? See how lean and weak you are ! First take it yourself and become sturdy and strong. After that we shall think of my case." Turning towards us, he jocularly said, "See how he is ! He is not able to improve his own health, and he says he will improve mine ! It would be more than enough if he could improve his health." The doctor could not say anything and so went away to the office. The next day Bhagavan arranged to give an ounce of the *Arishta* to each and everyone of those sitting near him and, taking one ounce himself, said, "Look. That Rāmachandra Rao is leaner than any one of us. So give him one more ounce. We will see if he becomes stout thereby."

Four or five days after that, came contractor Satagopa Naidu from Bangalore. He brought with him some bottles containing sherbet and sent them to Bhagavan through one of the people who usually sit near Bhagavan, saying that the sherbet should be given to Bhagavan every day in summer as it would help in giving some strength to the body. Satagopan comes to the Asramam, stays for months together, spends thousands of rupees and contributes a lot of money for the Asramam's working but never comes to the presence of Bhagavan. If you ask why it is so, there is nothing to say. That is one type of devotion.

As soon as he saw the sherbet bottles, Bhagavan laughed and said, "Rāmachandra Rao and he must

have consulted each other. Why all these things for us ? He is a rich man and so can afford to drink any number of bottles of sherbet. Please tell him to keep these bottles in his room and take the sherbet himself in small quantities every day."

"It seems he brought them for Bhagavan's use only," said a gentleman.

"I see," said Bhagavan. "We shall then do one thing." So saying, he had a big vessel brought, had it filled up with drinking water, poured all the sherbet into the water and then asked that one glassful each be given to everyone of the people assembled there. He moreover directed that one extra glassful should be given to Satagopan so that he could recover from exhaustion. The remaining sherbet was subsequently given to all the other Asramites.

In 1948, a devotee from Kanpur, by name Khanna, sent by parcel post some tins containing "Chyavana-prāsa", saying that it was prepared by himself specially for Bhagavan's use and that it would give some strength to Bhagavan's body if he took it. Saying that if it gave him strength it should give strength to others also, Bhagavan had it served to all people in the Asramam along with their early morning breakfast and himself took along with the others a similar quantity and nothing more.

If there is anything that is not wanted by others such as Kanji or cold rice, Bhagavan takes the major portion of it himself. If it is a delicacy like sweetmeats which everybody likes, he gives away the major portion to others and takes a small portion himself. Who is there comparable to him in this feeling of equality ? He can be compared to himself only.

(90) VEDA ADHYAYANA

(Study of Vēda)

16th May, 1949

It is usual for Dr. Srinivasa Rao to do Vēda parāyana (chanting of Vēdic hymns) along with the boys of the Sanskrit school whenever he comes here. Two or three days back, he came here and as usual sat with the boys for the evening Pārāyana tying his dhoti in the same manner as the Brahmachāris. Bhagavan had been noticing this for some time past but had not said anything. That evening he looked at the doctor and began laughing within himself. I thought there must be something unusual. As soon as the Pārāyana was over and the doctor got up, Bhagavan said, "What sir ! Do you wear your dhoti in this way or in the orthodox style on such occasions ? " *

With some nervousness the doctor said, "I do wear it in the orthodox style usually. I somehow tied it like this today. From tomorrow onwards I will wear it properly." "That's not it," said Bhagavan. "The pandits who come for Pārāyana tie their dhotis in the orthodox style. That is why I asked you. Moreover, you are a Mahārāshtrian. You are also a married man. I am only interested to know whether you are accustomed to that style or not." "No, Bhagavan," said the doctor. "From tomorrow onwards I shall wear it in that manner only." From that day onwards, he began wearing his dhoti in

* The orthodox style consists of wearing a dhoti round the body with one end taken in between the legs and tucked in at the back. This is how Maharashtrians and others wear the dhoti and also all married men.

the same manner as is done by married people. Bhagavan of course, saw this and laughed within himself.

With regard to the Vēda Pārāyana, if anybody commits a mistake, Bhagavan generally corrects him in this subtle way. In 1938, A Malayālec devotee by name Sankaran wrote Bhagavan's biography in Malayālam and brought it to Bhagavan saying, "We are thinking of sending it to the press. Bhagavan may be pleased to go through the book before publication." Bhagavan thereupon made a few corrections after informing the people around him. It seems that in the book it was stated in one place that people of all castes could study the Vēdās. Bhagavan noticed this and corrected it to say that all castes could practise the Vēdās by inserting the word '*Abhyāsa*' in place of the word '*Adhyayana*'. As Rāmanātha Iyer was there in the hall at the time, he heard all this. He did not know at the time that there was a difference between the words *Abhyāsa* and *Adhyayana*. Hence some people thought that Bhagavan had approved of *Adhyayana* (study of Vēdās) by all castes. With the intention of telling Kunjuswāmi about this Sankaran went home as soon as Bhagavan went into the hall for food.

It seems in those days Kunjuswāmi and Rāmanātha Iyer were living in a room by the side of the path leading to Pelakuthu. Both of them sat on a platform in their verandahs after food and, during a discussion about sundry matters, Rāmanātha Iyer said, 'Look, Kunjuswāmi. From tomorrow, you also can do *Vēdādhyanam*. Bhagavan has decided about it today.' Bhagavan, who usually goes to Pelakuthu after food, happened to be returning from there at the time and having heard this, said, "What? Is it I that decided thus? I never said all castes could do *Adhyayana*."

Both of them were startled by this sudden interruption and got up and with folded hands, Rāmanātha Iyer said, "It is only a short time back Bhagavan had approved of Sankaran's biography. It is stated that people of all castes could study Vēdās (*Vēdādhayana*)". "Yes, I did go through the book. I corrected, however, the word *Adhyayana* into 'Abhyāsa (practice)' " said Bhagavan. "Is there a difference between '*Adhyayana*' and '*Abhyāsa*' ? " they asked. "Why not? Vēda means Jnāna. So I said *Vēdābhyāsa* can be done. That means *Jnāna Abhyāsa* (practice of Jnāna). That's all. I never said *Adhyayana* (study) can be done," said Bhagavan. Rāmanātha Iyer replied, "I was not able to understand the difference. Only now when Bhagavan has explained to me clearly, I could comprehend the whole thing. Unless it is clearly stated that *Adhyayana* should not be done by all castes, it will not be possible for ordinary people to understand." Bhagavan said, "Let people understand in whatever way they like; why should we bother? Are we responsible for all the misunderstandings in this world?" So saying Bhagavan went towards the Asramam.

(91) WORLDLY DUTIES

17th May, 1949

Bhagavan has expressed his views not only about *Vēdādhayana* and similar matters but also about *Lokika Dharma* — that is, worldly duties. A young lady, by name Rājamma, the daughter of Thiruppā-puliyūr Krishnaswāmi Iyer, a devotee who has been coming to the Asramam off and on, came here recently, rented a house in Ramananagar and began staying

all alone in that house. It seems there were differences between herself and her husband and, as they had no children, she came away in 1945, saying that she would remain permanently in Bhagavan's presence. She was the only daughter of her parents. Perhaps because they were too old, or because of some other reason, the parents could not come to stay here permanently. As they felt it was not proper to allow their middle-aged daughter to stay all alone here, they used to write letters to her saying that she should stay either with her husband or with them. They had no objection to her going to Bhagavan for darshan now and then but they were unwilling to let her stay here permanently. She used to inform Bhagavan about all this and say that she did not feel like going back and that she would reply saying she would stay here alone.

For some time Bhagavan kept quiet as if he had not heard her properly. At last one day he said, "Look here. You have elders who want you there, but you will not go, and insist on staying here. You may do as you please. Stay if you like or go if you want to. Why tell me all this? Your parents have been visiting this place for a very long time. If they come here and ask me, 'Swami, what is this?', what can I tell them?" She was upset by what Bhagavan said and went out. Immediately after that, Bhagavan looked at Rāmachandra Iyer and said, "When the parents advise her either to stay with her husband or with themselves, what is the use of her coming and telling me all this? What can I do? Will they not think that instead of advising her properly, Swami has kept her near himself? Both the parents are old. She is the only child. Whoever asked her to discard her duties and stay alone here? Whoever asked her to come here?"

You know, during the early days of my stay here I used to go over to your place whenever you had any domestic difficulty and come back in due course. In 1945, you wrote to me about my sister-in-law's sickness and the troubles you were experiencing but you did not ask me to come. You did, however, say that my sister-in-law, in her sickness was always expressing a desire to see me. I read out the contents of that letter to Bhagavan and told him that I would write to you again and go over to your place after receiving a reply. That was because you had not written to me to come. Bhagavan however felt displeased and told me to do as I liked best. Noticing it, I said immediately that I was starting that same night. Then Bhagavan replied saying, "Yes. That's good." Meanwhile, Rājagopāla Iyer came into the hall and enquired whether it was a fact that I was going away to my brother's place. Bhagavan said, "Yes. They will be satisfied if she goes there. It is good that she should go. When a person is suffering from illness and keeps on asking for her sister-in-law, should she not go ? "

Sometime back a young man, closely related to Sundaram Iyer (Bhagavan's father) argued with his parents saying that he did not wish to marry and that was the reason why he came here. It did not matter if he came but even in the very beginning he went and sat for food in the place where non-Brahmins eat. The Sarvādhikāri did not like it and asked him to come to the place reserved for Brahmins. He did not do so. Instead, he said that there was no need for caste distinctions in Bhagavan's presence. The Sarvādhikāri tried to give him proper advice by saying "It is all right for Bhagavan as he has renounced everything. How can you take up that stand ? If your parents

hear of this, what will they say ? " He did not, however, heed that advice and began to argue. There was a heated exchange of words. Bhagavan was silently observing the whole thing unconcernedly. The young man could not contain himself and so, approaching Bhagavan, said, " Should not caste distinctions be discarded when one comes to Bhagavan's presence ? "

" Oho ! Is it the only thing that has remained for you ? Does it mean that everything else has been discarded ? If so, this also could be discarded. Where is the question of discarding ? It disappears of its own accord. What do you say ? Have all other differences been discarded by you ? " enquired Bhagavan. Thereupon that young man went to the place reserved for Brahmins and sat there without uttering another word. Later on he married, got children, began doing a job and comes here now and then for Bhagavan's darshan.

Is it not clear from this that Bhagavan wants everyone to perform worldly duties so long as one has the feeling of ego and also the feeling of love and hatred ?

(92) EQUALITY !

(Samadarsatvam)

22nd May, 1949

The Mandalābhishēkam was performed in Māthru-bhūtēswara temple on Vaisākha Sudha Chathurthi, i.e. Monday the 2nd May, 1949. Mahāpūja (the Anniversary of the death of Bhagavan's Mother) was performed yesterday, Vaishākha Bahula Navami. By that time, the erection

of the front hall of the temple had almost been completed. Hence the Sarvādhikāri consulted his assistants and requested Bhagavan to stay in the front hall on those two days. On the afternoon of the 20th accordingly Bhagavan came there. That day I happened to be there a little earlier than usual. When I went in by the main gate there was an uncommon activity in the front hall. I went to the verandah eagerly and found that Bhagavan was seated on the sofa. His face was not radiant as usual. I was wondering why it was so. I could not ask anybody.

The Sarvādhikāri was standing opposite Bhagavan's sofa with his friends and some important people amongst Asramam workers and was saying something. Bhagavan was merely saying 'Yes, yes,' in a non-committal manner. I hesitated to go in under those circumstances and so stood in the verandah. Bhagavan had noticed through the window my coming and my hesitation to enter the hall. Ten minutes elapsed by the time all of them left. Subsequently Sivānandam alone was there near Bhagavan. Two or three people who had recently arrived were seated at a distance. Bhagavan was looking intently at the ceiling of the hall and at the huge stones that were being chiselled outside. I went in, prostrated and got up. Bhagavan looked at me and with a voice full of kindness, said, "Do you see this? They have imprisoned me within these four walls. They have made me a prisoner by preventing other people from coming in. Look! There is no scope for anyone to come in." So saying, he looked up at the ceiling, which had no outlet or inlet anywhere and said, "How can they (the squirrels) come here?" He continued to stare at the ceiling. I stood absolutely dumb-founded on realising his way of looking at things. Sivānandam, who was close by, said, "The Sarvādhikāri and others feel

that if Bhagavan is here he will be protected from rain or hot sunshine outside." Bhagavan whose look was concentrated on the ceiling, came to with a start when he heard those words and looking at Sivānandam, said, "That's all right. If we look to our comfort, is it not at the expense of the sufferings of others ? Squirrels, monkeys, peacocks, cows and others have no chance of coming here. Does it not mean that we have deprived them of all their privileges ? People think that it is a great happiness for Swāmi if he is here. What is to be done ?" Bhagavan's voice became tremulous. The attendant took up the thread of the conversation and said, "Yes, that is true. Only human beings can come in ; animals and birds cannot come in freely." Bhagavan did not say anything.

After sometime, some rich devotees came and sat opposite Bhagavan. One or two poor people came after them but were afraid to come in. Noticing this through the windows, Bhagavan said to his attendants, "There you are. Look at those people. You said there was every convenience for men to come in. Is there scope for all people to come in ? Rich people are accustomed to see huge buildings with lights, fans, collapsible doors and other imposing furnishings, and so they come inside unhesitatingly. But poor people like me will hesitate to come in, for they feel that it is a place where only rich people live. They are afraid of what people would say if they come in, and so, go away quietly like those people who, as you see, are peeping through the windows. Where is the place for them here ? See those poor people ! What a pity !" Unable to say anything further Bhagavan resumed silence.

As soon as it was evening, he sent away some of his attendants saying that that was the time when all of them

(monkeys, peacocks etc.) come here. "They may perhaps think that Swāmi has given them the slip and gone elsewhere. Please go. What a pity ! Go, give them at least some food and come back." As soon as the attendants returned after feeding them, Bhagavan remarked with a tremulous voice, "Have you fed them all ? They will perhaps feel that Swāmi has deserted them and has gone away to a better place and is sitting there so that he alone can be happy. Perhaps they thought that I had forgotten them. There is no scope for them to come here. What to do ? " Whenever any animals or birds come to him, he would always say, "We do not know who they are," and would never look at them with indifference. If any of the attendants do not give them proper attention he would not tolerate it, but would say, "That is bad. You merely see the skin that covers the body but not the person that is within. You feel that you are great, and the others are small, and so try to drive them away. They have come here just as we have come. Why do they not have the same rights that we have ? " He used to admonish them thus. It is not surprising that Bhagavan feels compassionate towards the animals and the poor who do not venture to come into this hall with all these lights, fans, iron doors, guards and others paraphernalia. You see, *samadarśatvam* i.e. looking at all living beings with equality, is but natural to Bhagavan.

(93) THE HELPER OF THE HELPLESS

24th May, 1949

You remember, till 1943, in the old hall there used to be a door on the southern side opposite to where Bhaga-

van used to sit on the sofa and a window in the southern wall which is now converted into a door. Devotees used to enter by the southern door, have a Darsan of Bhagavan who is the incarnation of Dakshināmūrthy and go out by the northern door. Some ladies used to sit on the southern side opposite Bhagavan. As time passed, the number of visitors increased and ladies with their children began sitting there. The children naturally began to create some disturbance. Besides that, from 1943 onwards, the number of visitors of all types increased still more. Moreover, some poor ladies were coming with their children to prostrate and the children were making water there itself. The mothers do not get even a cloth to wipe it out ; and even if a cloth was given, some of the modern ladies would not take the trouble to clean the place. Therefore, Bhagavan's attendants had to clean it up. They were tired and vexed at this and thought of preventing such uncivilised people from coming into the hall. Bhagavan, however, would not, under any circumstances, agree to it. Hence, they began thinking of preventing ladies from sitting in the hall and making arrangements for their sitting in the verandah only. I came to know of it indirectly and was very much grieved. I told them, "Just because one or two people behave in an uncivilised manner, why do you intend to penalise all ladies by preventing them from sitting inside ? We trusted Bhagavan and have come here from long distances. Please do not penalise all of us. I will clean that place whenever necessary." From that time I began looking after that work. Even so, they were not satisfied. At last, one day, they went to Bhagavan and told him that they would make seating arrangements for ladies outside. Bhagavan thereupon asked why men should sit in the hall if women could not sit there. The

attendants stated the difficulties they were experiencing in looking after the ladies that come and go. Bhagavan said, "What work is there in the hall even for Bhagavan ? It will be all right if he sits under the almond tree, which is opposite. There will then be no trouble or worry for anybody, whatever the children may do." When he said that, they gave up all their attempts to isolate the ladies. Instead, the window on one side was replaced by the door on the other side and vice-versa. After that, the ladies got their seating place opposite to Bhagavan's feet.

A similiar incident happened in 1946 when I was appointed as a volunteer for ladies during the Brahmotsavam. I have already written to you that Bhagavan changed his seat to the Golden Jubilee Hall immediately it was ready, that is, on the third day of the festival. He did not thereafter come back to the hall even during the rest period in the afternoons. There was not even a curtain around the sofa. Only a rope was tied to prevent people from the villages crowding around him in the afternoons. The people used to wander about the town and so when they came to Bhagavan's presence very much tired, some used to squat on the floor with legs outstretched ; some used to discuss their affairs in loud voices and some used to lie down and snore. That used to happen between 12 noon and 2 p.m. Mothers used to sleep while breast-feeding the children and the other children used to wander and play about everywhere. When attempts were made to send such people away, it seems Bhagavan said, "Poor people ! They must have wandered about a good deal. They are now taking some rest. How could you drive them away ? Let them stay on."

I went there soon after it was 2 p.m. By that time, those people were leaving. Krishnaswāmi and others

had to clean the place themselves. Unable to put up with that nuisance any longer, Krishnaswāmi was requesting Bhagavan to sit in the hall only. Bhagavan did not agree.

Krishnaswāmi : "Who will tidy up the nuisance committed by the children ? "

Bhagavan : "It should be all right if their mothers are asked to clean it up themselves and are requested to be careful thereafter."

Krishnaswāmi : "Who is there to tell them all that ? If it were the Congress, they have women volunteers for looking after the women visitors."

Bhagavan (looking at me with a smile) : "There she is. We have a volunteer. Why do you say we have none ? "

I : (understanding Bhagavan's instructions) : "Will they care to listen to me ? "

Bhagavan (coolly) : "Why not ? Outsiders will certainly carry out your instructions."

I : "Then it is all right. I shall certainly tell them."

Bhagavan : "Poor people ! They come here only to see Swāmi ; and they get all the required conveniences here."

In accordance with Bhagavan's orders I looked after the work from that day. That arrangement was found very convenient, and so the office people considered the matter and confirmed me in that work. Bhagavan wanted to give Darshan to poor people in that way during those ten days and he sat there too, with kind solicitude for them. I therefore felt that I should also do that much of service to them.

As you know, during the time of the Jayanti, Mahā-puja and other celebrations, Bhagavan does not get up for his meals unless and until the feeding of the poor starts and is half-finished. It seems in the past, during such festive occasions, Bhagavan did not take his food except with the last batch. It is only recently, on representations made by devotees, that Bhagavan has been taking food after the feeding of the poor was half-way through. Daily, before the time for the mid-day meal, and before striking the gong, rice is mixed with all the other preparations, made into balls and is sent out for distribution to the poor. That custom prevailed for a long time. Within recent times, however, it so happened that the distribution was done either while meals were being taken or soon after that. One day, Bhagavan saw a poor man struggling under a tree as he could not get his share of the food. Next day, when the gong was struck, Bhagavan got up and went to the tree where the poor people had gathered, stood there and said, "If you do not give them food first, I will not come to the dining hall at all. I will stand under the tree along with these people, stretch out my hands for food like them, and when I am given a ball of food, I will eat it, go straight to the hall and sit there." From that day onwards, it is only after food is sent to the poor, they strike the gong in the dining hall.

You know what happened one day in February 1947? A poor man came into the hall and stood opposite to Bhagavan's sofa. As Bhagavan was busy writing something, he did not notice him. The attendants asked the poor man to go out. He did not go. "If you do not go away, why not sit?" they said. He did not move. Bhagavan lifted his head and looked at him questioningly. The poor man said with great eagerness, "Swāmi,

I do not want anything. My stomach is burning with hunger. Please arrange to give me one handful of rice to satisfy this great hunger." Bhagavan looked at his attendants indicating his intentions. "For this small thing, should you ask Bhagavan? Come, let us go," said one of the attendants and took the poor man towards the kitchen. After they left, Bhagavan looked at all those in the hall and said, "Do you see that? As he is a very poor man, he has no desires except one and that is to fill his stomach with food as it is burning with hunger. With that, he will be satisfied and will go. He goes and lies down under some tree and sleeps happily. Where do we have the satisfaction that he has? We have any number of desires. If one desire is satisfied another one comes up. Hence where is the chance for our desires to be satisfied?"

Is it not clear from this that in Bhagavan's presence, there is a shelter for the weak, the helpless and the poor at all times?

(94) RESIDING IN THE FRONT HALL

3rd June, 1949

Bhagavan spent the whole day time in the new hall of the temple on the Mahāpuja day and returned to the Golden Jubilee thatched hall for the night. The work in the new hall was finished a week later. Some devotees felt that the Golden Jubilee Hall would be more comfortable for Bhagavan and pointed this out to the office people. The Sarvādhikāri, however, desired that Bhagavan should be seated only in the front hall of the

temple. So, he approached Bhagavan one morning with his attendants and told him that on Jyēṣṭha Sudha Panchami (the 5th day of the lunar month of Jyēṣṭha) i.e., on Wednesday 1-6-1949, at 10 a.m., he would make all the arrangements for Bhagavan to sit on the Yōgāsana (couch) in the new hall and would Bhagavan be pleased to occupy that seat. Bhagavan in his usual disinterested manner, said, "What have I to say in the matter? I will sit wherever all of you want me to sit." "That is why we have all come here to beg of you to come to the new hall," they said. Bhagavan nodded his head in assent.

On the morning of the first instant, decorative designs of lime powder were drawn on the floor around the front hall and strings of green leaves were tied in a row to the doors and windows. On the Yōgāsana, a mattress of silk cotton with a covering of satin cloth was spread and at the back a broad pillow was laid. A silk bed-sheet covered the mattress. It was also prettily decorated. Abhishēkam and other Pūjas were being performed in the temple, the bells were ringing, arathi (light) with camphor was being waved, when at 9-45 a.m. Bhagavan, who was returning from the Gosala, was led with Pūrnakalasa (vessels full of water) and with Brahmins chanting the Vedas, to the front hall and was requested to sit on the Yōgāsana. After the recital of 'Nakarmanā' and other Mantras, and the waving of camphor lights, and after all the devotees had prostrated before him, Bhagavan sat on the couch arranged for him.

I sat in the hall reflecting on the whole scene as follows: Vidyāranya began the building of a city in the shape of a Chakra (wheel) but did not succeed. He

had, however, written about it, saying that in future some Emperor would do it. Ganapati Muni had that in mind and so wrote in *Arunāchala Ashtakam* (Eight verses in praise of Arunāchala), beginning with :

“Sree Chakrākrīti Shōna Shaila Vapusham”

In accordance with that sentence, he said, “This hill itself is in the shape of a Chakra, so this is the place meant by Vidyāranya. Bhagavan is the Emperor and the only thing that remains is to build houses around.” So saying, he drew up plans for the proposed kingdom but disappointed us ultimately as he passed away before the plans could be executed. The Sarvādhikāri, however, built a temple over the Samādhi of his mother, made the front hall the chief place of the empire, constructed a stone seat like the throne of Vikramārka for Bhagavan to sit on ; all according to Ganapati Muni’s great dreams. His desires have been fulfilled and the Emperor amongst Yōgis, Sri Bhagavan, is seated there, like real Sadāsiva.

While I was thus absorbed in my own thoughts, the Stapathi and others came with a plate containing fruits, flowers and other auspicious articles and got them touched by Bhagavan ; they then went out through the southern doorway. I did not understand what it was all about. Bhagavan was looking with steadfastness in that direction. With a desire to know what it was about, I went out and saw opposite the doorway and in the open courtyard a huge stone. They smeared on it turmeric powder and kumkum, placed on it a flower garland, broke some coconuts on it, lit some camphor and began chiselling it. When I asked somebody what it was, I was told that it was for making a statue of

Bhagavan. My heart throbbed with misgivings. You may ask, why ? I felt disturbed because it is known to us all that Bhagavan is sick. Under these circumstances I began to wonder why a statue was being thought of. Comforting myself with several explanations, I came to Bhagavan's presence and sat down. Bhagavan noticed all my misgivings and my troubled mind. In the meantime the function relating to the statue was over and they all came in. The bell in the dining hall rang and all dispersed. But somehow my mind continued to be troubled. When I entered in the afternoon at 3 p.m. Bhagavan told us some stories and made me forget the matter. I will write all those things in another letter.

'(95) THE HAPPINESS OF AN INDEPENDENT LIFE

3rd June, 1949

Revolving in my mind the details relating to the function held this morning for the construction of a statue, I went to the Asramam this afternoon before 3 p.m. As Bhagavan had gone out, I was standing in the hall awaiting his return. The silk-cotton mattress that was spread on the couch was slippery because it was new, though it was thick and firmly stitched. As a big pillow was placed on one side for Bhagavan to keep his arms, another behind to lean against and a third one at the feet, the actual seating space got considerably reduced. As I was wondering how Bhagavan would be able to sit there, he came in. Sitting on the mattress and pressing it with his hand, he said, looking at his attendants, "See how this mattress slips from one side to another ! People think that it will be

comfortable for Bhagavan if there is a costly mattress. It is, however, not possible to sit on this restfully. Why this ? It will be much more comfortable if I sit on the stone seat itself. Truly, I do not find even the slightest happiness on these mattresses and pillows, compared with the happiness I had when I was sitting or sleeping on the raised platform which I myself constructed of stone and mud in Virūpāksha cave. As was told in the story about the Sādhu, people think that Swāmi is undergoing great hardship when he lives in a thatched shed and lies on a stone bench, and so they make a fuss. I do not find the slightest happiness on these mattresses and pillows. It will perhaps be better if, like that Sādhu in the story, I gather some stones similar to those I had in the Virūpeksha cave, take them to whichever place I go, and spread them on a mattress like this. At that place it was a stone platform. In the Jubilee Hall and even here, it is a stone couch. The only obstacle between me and this couch is this mattress. But one thing. The pillow under the feet, the pillow on the side, and the broad pillow at the back, all the three, are almost as hard as stones. So this is almost like the story of the Sādhu. Without bringing stones from elsewhere, my bed of stones is already here."

A devotee said, "What is that story of the Sādhu, which Bhagavan has now mentioned ?" whereupon Bhagavan began relating the story as follows :

"A great Mahātma was living as a Sādhu under a tree in a forest. He always used to keep with him three stones. While sleeping, he used to keep one of them under the head, another under the waist and the third under the legs and cover himself with a sheet. When it rained, the body used to be on the stones and so the

water would flow underneath, and the water that fell on the sheet too, would flow down. So there was no disturbance to his sleep ; he used to sleep soundly. When sitting, he used to keep the three stones together like a hearth and sit upon them comfortably. Hence snakes and other reptiles did not trouble him nor did he trouble them, for they used to crawl through the slits under the stones. Somebody used to bring him food and he would eat it. And so, there was nothing for him to worry about.

"A king, who came to that forest for hunting, saw this Sādhu and felt, 'What a pity ! How much must he be suffering by having to adjust his body suitably to those stones and sleep thereon. I must take him home and keep him with me for at least one or two days and make him feel comfortable.' So thinking, he went home and sent two of his soldiers with a palanquin and its bearers, with instructions to invite the Sādhu respectfully and bring him to his palace. He also said that if they did not succeed in bringing the Sādhu, they would be punished. They came and saw the Sādhu and told him that the king had ordered them to bring him to the palace and that he should come. When he showed disinclination to go with them, they said that they would be punished if they returned without him. So they begged of him to come, if only to save them from trouble. As he did not want them to get into trouble on his account, he agreed to go with them. What was there for him to pack up ? A *kaupeenam*,* a sheet and those three stones. He folded and kept the *kaupeenam* in that sheet, kept those three stones also in

* *Kaupeenam* : A small piece of cloth, usually a small strip, worn over the privities.

the sheet and tied them together. ‘What is this ? This Swāmi is bringing with him some stones when he is going to a Raja’s palace ! Is he mad or what ?’ thought those soldiers. Anyway, he got into the palanquin with his bundle and came to the king. The Raja saw that bundle, thought it contained some personal effects, took him into the palace with due respect, feasted him properly, arranged a tape cot with a mattress of silk cotton to sleep upon. The Sādhu opened his bundle, took out the three stones, spread them on the bed, covered himself with the sheet and slept as usual.

“The next morning the king came, bowed to him with respect and asked, ‘Swāmi, is it comfortable for you here ?’

“Swāmi : ‘Yes. What is there wanting here ? I am always happy.’

“King : ‘That is not it, Swāmi. You were experiencing hardships in the forest by having to sleep on those stones. Here this bed and this house must be giving you happiness. That is why I am asking.’

“Swāmi : ‘The bed that was there is here also. The bed that is here is there also. So I have the same happiness everywhere. There is nothing wanting at any time, either in regard to my sleep or to my happiness.’

“The king was puzzled and looked at the cot. He saw that the three stones were on it. Whereupon, the king immediately prostrated himself before the Sādhu and said, ‘Oh Great Man ! Without knowing your greatness I brought you here with the intention of making you happy. I did not know that you are always in a state of happiness, and so I behaved in this foolish

manner. Please excuse me and bless me.' After making up for his mistake in this way, he allowed the Sādhu to go his way. This is the story of the Sādhu."

"So, in the eyes of Mahātmās, that free life is the real happy life?" said that devotee. "What else? Life in big buildings like this is like prison life. Only I may be an 'A' class prisoner. When I sit on mattresses like these, I feel that I am sitting on prickly pears. Where is peace and comfort?" said Bhagavan.

Next day that mattress was taken away and the usual mattress was spread on the couch. Even so, several people thought that it might be better to leave Bhagavan to a free life like that of the Sādhu. But Bhagavan had to stay there alone, like a parrot in the cage of the devotees because the devotees never leave him free.

(96) FAN

4th June, 1949

Yesterday evening, by the time Bhagavan went out and came back, some of the modern civilised devotees switched on all the fans in the new hall and sat there comfortably, awaiting Bhagavan's return. As soon as he came, he looked up and while sitting on the couch, asked the attendants as to who had switched on all the fans. Pointing to the people sitting there, they said, "They wanted us to do so and we have done it." "I see. What a great thing you have done! If they were feeling so very sultry it would have been sufficient if only those fans where they are sitting, had been switch-

ed on. Why all this ? ” asked Bhagavan. “ They said that it would be very pleasant if all the fans were switched on,” said the attendants. “ Is that so ? What an amount of electric power will be consumed by these fans ! What a costly bill ! Why this expense on our account ? Enough, enough. Stop that,” said Bhagavan. “ They are asking that they may be kept on until at least the Vēda pārāyana is over,” said Krishnaswāmi. “ Oh ! Is that so ? They are rich people and so in their houses they can sit down with fans whose use may cost ten times more than this. Why should we have this ? Why this show ? The hand fan is there and the hands are there. Stop them all,” said Bhagavan. At that, the attendants switched off all the fans except the one above those people.

During the early days of my stay here, i.e., in 1941-42, someone brought an electric fan and requested that it be used by Bhagavan. “ Why this fan ? The ordinary fan is there. We have hands. I will fan myself with it whenever necessary. Why do I require all these things ? ” said Bhagavan. “ Is it not some trouble ? If the electric fan is used there is no trouble whatsoever,” said that devotee. “ What is the trouble ? If the ordinary fan is used we get just as much breeze as we want. The electric fan blows too much breeze and with a whizzing noise. Moreover, some electric current is consumed. For that, there will be a bill. Why should we make the office bear that expense on our account ? ” said Bhagavan. “ We have got it here, Swāmi, with the permission of the office,” said the devotee. “ Oh, is that so ? Then let them have the fan for themselves. They are people who work and it is necessary for them. Why should I need it ? ” said Bhagavan. The devotee did not say anything further but went away, leaving the fan there.

As it was a table fan, it was kept near Bhagavan's sofa and it used to be switched on by someone nearby whenever it was sultry. Bhagavan would immediately say, "It is only because of such things I had said you should not keep it here at all. If you want a fan you can keep it near yourselves." And if nobody stopped it he used to stop it himself with the aid of a small stick. When Bhagavan would not agree to the use of even one fan, would he consent to the use of many fans? Not only that, he will not allow anyone to fan him even with an ordinary fan. If any one does so, he will say that if it is so sultry, he too should serve the devotee by fanning him. Last May, when the radium needles were applied to Bhagavan's hands and Venkataratnam and other attendants were fanning him Bhagavan admonished them a number of times.

(97) DESIRELESSNESS

5th June, 1949

I wrote to you in my letters of yesterday and the day before about the disinclination of Bhagavan to use satin-covered mattress, pillows, fans and the like. You know, in September 1946 the Golden Jubilee of Bhagavan's birthday was celebrated. About a month before those celebrations the Mahārani of Baroda sent by parcel post a velvet shawl embroidered with silk and gold thread. The office people sent it to Bhagavan through Rājagopāla Iyer, one of the office attendants. He showed it to Bhagavan and wanted to spread it on the sofa, but Bhagavan would not permit him to do so. When the devotee tried to place it under Bhagavan's feet, Bhagavan withdrew his feet and

sat with folded legs. Thereupon the devotee placed it over the pillow on which Bhagavan reclined. Immediately, thereafter, Bhagavan stopped leaning on it, moved to the middle of the sofa and sat in Padmāsana pose without uttering a single word.

The devotee felt it was no use trying any further and so he folded the shawl and took it back to the office. After he left, Bhagavan sat as usual and said, "These are meant for those who wear shirts, coats, turbans and appear in style, but why do I require all these? If I have to sit on them, I feel like sitting on prickly pears. According to the old saying, I have a bare body and a bald head; of what use are these to me? This towel itself is my silk shawl and my golden upper cloth."

"In some places such things are being used. That is why perhaps they have sent it," said a devotee. "It may be so. But what status have I to use them? I am a poor man. For my status, even what I now have is too much. This sofa, these mattresses, these pillows — why all these? You people do not agree, but how satisfactory would it be if I could spread out this towel and sit on the floor!" said Bhagavan. "You say even that towel should be no bigger than the present one!" said Mudaliar. "Why a bigger one? It is half-a-yard broad and three-quarters of a yard long. It is sufficient for drying the body after bath, for spreading over the head if you walk in the sun, for tying round the neck if it is cold and for spreading on the floor to sit on. What more could we do with a bigger one?" said Bhagavan.

Some rich people bring silver tumblers and plates and request Bhagavan to use them. Bhagavan would not even touch them, but would send them back

to the office if received through them, or give them back to the people if they are brought direct to him. Knowing that such articles would not be accepted, Jānaki Ammal, the wife of Dr. Ganapati Iyer, sent through a devotee for Bhagavan's use wooden sandals with silver fittings. Bhagavan touched them and seeing the silver fittings remarked, "They are rich people. Sandals with silver fittings are therefore suitable for them but not for us. So, send them back to those people. Tell them, 'Swāmi has touched them and that is enough'. We have feet given to us by God. Why these ornaments? Give back to them their articles." So saying he sent them back.

Let alone the question of wearing sandals with silver fittings. He does not wear even ordinary wooden sandals. Even in the height of summer, when the feet get scorched by heat, he walks bare-footed and refuses to use anything to protect the feet. Some-time back, when the path leading to the Gōsāla from the office was cemented and Bhagavan was walking on it in the hot sun, some devotees, who could not see him suffering thus, poured water along the path, but Bhagavan stopped them saying, "Why are you wasting so much water for my sake by pouring it over the ground? If you open a shed for supplying drinking water to travellers, how much more useful it will be! Why do two or three people waste their time and water for my sake? Please don't do it." It was therefore stopped but, instead, the whole passage was covered with a pandal. Bhagavan used to say the same thing even if khus-khus 'hatties' (screens) are erected and water sprinkled on them.

* For a great *Thyāgi* and *Mahāpurusha* like this, will there be any desire for silver sandals, satin-cloth

mattresses, silk-covered pillows and other ornamental things ? Why these luxuries which curtail freedom ? *Vairāgya* is his ornamentation, *Sivavibhuti* his glory.

(98) THE IMPORTANCE OF YĀTRA AND PRADAKSHINA

(Pilgrimage and Circumambulance)

26th June, 1949

It is well known that Bhagavan is not keeping well. Troubled in my mind on that account and unable to know what to do, I decided to go round the Hill, not only on Tuesdays as usual but also on Fridays and to pray to Arunāchalēswara for Bhagavan's health. With that decision, I went to Bhagavan on Thursday evening to tell him that I was going round the Hill the next morning. "Tomorrow ? Is it Tuesday ?" asked Bhagavan. "No. It is Friday," I said. As if he had understood my purpose, he said "Yes, yes."

One of the devotees who had recently come and had been staying for some time, asked Bhagavan, "Several people here go round the hill frequently. What is its greatness ?" Bhagavan told him the following story :

"The greatness of this *Giri Pradakshinā* has been described at length in 'Arunachala Puranam'. Lord Nandikesa asked Sadāsiva a similar question and Sadāsiva narrated as follows : 'To go round this hill is good. The word 'Pradakshina' has a typical meaning. The letter 'Pra' stands for removal of all kinds of sins ;

'da' stands for fulfilling the desires ; 'kshi' stands for freedom from future births ; 'na' stands for giving deliverance through Jnāna. If by way of *Pradakshina* you walk one step it gives happiness in this world, two steps, it gives happiness in heaven, three steps, it gives bliss of Satyalōka which can be attained. One should go round either in *Mouna* (silence) or *Dhyana* (meditation) or *Japa* (repetition of Lord's name) or *Sankeertana* (Bhajan) and thereby think of God all the time. One should walk slowly like a woman who is in the ninth month of pregnancy. It seems Amba who was doing Tapas here, went round the hill on the day of the Krithika star in the first quarter of the night. Immediately after the Darshan of the holy beacon, she became finally absorbed in Lord Siva. It is stated that on the third day after the festival of the Holy Beacon, Siva himself started for the *Pradakshina* with all his followers. Really, it is difficult to describe the pleasure and the happiness one gets by this *Pradakshina*. The body gets tired, the sense organs lose their strength and all the activities of the body become absorbed within. It is possible thus to forget oneself and get into a state of meditation. As one continues to walk, the body automatically gets harmonized as in the *Āsana* state. The body therefore becomes improved in health. Besides this, there are several varieties of medical herbs on the hill. The air that passes over those herbs is good for the lungs. As there is no vehicular traffic there is no worry about making way for cars and buses. One can walk care-free according to one's wishes.

"It used to be very exciting during those days when we were going for *Pradakshina*. We started whenever we felt like it especially if there was any important day, we used to halt whenever we felt

it was late or we were tired, cook for ourselves and eat. There was no anxiety whatsoever as there was no stipulation that we should stop at any particular place. Before railway travel came in, pilgrimages were all made on foot. They never used to start with an idea of reaching a particular place at a particular time, or that they should stop for a particular period at any particular place. There is a proverb saying that people who go to Kāsi (Banāras) and those who go to Kāti (cremation ground) are equal. Only those who have no hope of coming back would start for Kāsi. Carrying all their belongings with them, they used to walk along immersed in Dhyāna, stop whenever they felt tired and start again in due course. There used to be *Dharmasālas* (rest houses) at the outskirts of the villages so that there was no need for those pilgrims to go into the village proper. Where there were no *Dharmasālas* there used to be temples, caves, trees and piles of stones, which were available as places of shelter for them. Those pilgrims became absorbed in their Ātma by walking with no other thought than that of God. *Giripradakshina* is also the same thing. The body becomes light and it walks of its own accord. There will not be the feeling that we are walking. The Dhyāna that you cannot get into while sitting, you get into automatically if you go for *Pradakshina*. The place and the atmosphere there are like that. However unable a person is to walk, if he once goes round the hill he will feel like going again and again. The more you go, the more the enthusiasm for it. It never decreases. Once a person is accustomed to the happiness of the *Pradakshina*, he can never give it up. Look at Nāgamma ! She used to go round only once a week on every Tuesday. Now she is going around even on

Fridays. She goes around all alone in the dark without any fear whatsoever."

"A Sadhu by name Kannappa, it seems, goes round every day," said the devotee. "Yes, yes. He is a very old man. He cannot see. So he starts every day at 8 o'clock in the night as there will not be much cart traffic. He has a conch shell which he blows as he goes. Hearing that sound, all people make way for him. There are several devices for people who do not have eyesight," said Bhagavan.

"Is it a fact that when Bhagavan was going round the hill with the devotees during the night he used to see groups of Siddhās ?" asked another. "Yes. All that is written in the Biography." So saying Bhagavan resumed silence.

(99) SĀSTRAS

2nd July, 1949

After Bhagavan came into the new hall it was decided by the Sarvādhikāri to keep the library in the old hall, and so big almirahs were made. It was also decided that the library should be looked after by Gōvindarājula Subba Rao and that Venkataratnam should remain exclusively at the service of Bhagavan. Venkataratnam handed over all the work to Subba Rao and sat in the new hall with Bhagavan.

In the afternoon of the day before yesterday at 3 o'clock while returning from the Gosāla Bhagavan saw the almirahs that were being made and also

the books that were spread out in the old hall and then came into the new hall. While sitting on the couch he looked at Venkataratnam and said, "What, Assistant Librarian ? Have you handed over charge of everything and come here ?" Venkataratnam replied in the affirmative. With a view to remove any little regret about it that Venkataratnam might be having in his mind, Bhagavan remarked as follows : "Ancients have said that the superabundance of book knowledge is the cause of the rambling of the mind. That will not carry you to the goal. Reading of Sāstras and becoming Pandits may give fame to a person but they destroy the peace of mind which is necessary for the seeker of truth and deliverance. A Mumukshu (a seeker of deliverance) should understand the essence of the Sāstras but should give up the reading of Sāstras as that is inimical to Dhyāna (meditation). It is like accepting the grain and discarding the chaff. There will be many big almirahs with many books. How many of them can be read ? There are so many books and religions that one life is not enough to read all the books relating to even one religion. Where then is the time for practice ? The more you read, the more you feel like reading further. The result of all that is to go on discussing with other people who have books and spend time thus but that will not lead to deliverance. What books had I seen and what Vēdanta discourses had I heard except to close my eyes and remain peaceful and quiet during the first two years of my coming here ?"

A person who had come into the hall a little earlier, said, "Swāmi, you must favour me by giving me that peace for my mind." Bhagavan replied with a smile, "Oho ! Is that so ? First find out what is meant by the mind. If you enquire thus,

the mind itself will disappear. That which will be left is peace itself. You will then know that what is always there is what is called peace. Even the Vēdas begin with 'Shānti' and close with 'Shānti' (peace). Every-day the Vēdas are being recited here. Whenever they are recited, the words 'Shānti hi' 'Shānti hi' 'Shānti hi' will be repeated. But no one bothers to find out the meaning of those words. If they understand the meaning they would realise that what is begun with Shānti and what is concluded with Shānti must have Shānti in between also. The whole thing will be full of Shānti. Hence they must be begun at a time when the mind is peaceful and quiet."

Venkataratnam remarked, "Sankarāchārya has said the same thing in his 'Ātma Bōdha' when he described the Jnāni as Atmarāma and Shānti as Sita.

तीर्त्वा मोहार्णवं हत्वा रागद्रेषादि राक्षसान् ।
योगीशान्तिं समायुक्तो शात्मारामो विराजते ॥

It is this sloka, is it not?" "Yes," said Bhagavan.

"Recently, a gentleman who came here for Bhagavan's darshan has written to me. It seems that, since his return he is seeing a light and hearing a sound while sitting for Dhyāna. He is unable to find out what it is. He has asked me to mention this to Bhagavan and write to him your remarks, if any," said Venkataratnam.

"Whatever light is seen and whatever sound is heard, there must be some one who sees and who hears. Ask him to find out who that someone is. He should not worry about these outside things. If he enquires about the someone who sees, the thought of those outer

things will completely disappear. There will not be any care or concern whether such things appear or disappear. They are not there without the Self. None has any doubt about one's own self. Leaving such a certain thing as Self, people begin entertaining doubts and undergo all sorts of troubles to clear those doubts. Let him doubt the person who gets the doubts," said Bhagavan.

"If all experiences disappear through the enquiry 'Who am I?' is there any need of Sāstras for a Sādhak?" asked Venkataratnam. "If a person reads Sāstras he can debate with the pandits and thus feel satisfied, but they are of no use for Sādhana. Whenever any thought comes, enquire who gets the thought. The answer to this is *Mowna* (silence). Where there is nothing else except one's own self, whatever you see or hear, that is Brahman. That is Ātma. That is the 'Self'" said Bhagavan.

(100) ADVAITA DRISHTI

10th July, 1949

Recently an Andhra gentleman came here, discussed the story of the deliverance of Gajēndra in the Bhāgavatam and read out some Padyas (verses) from the Bhāgavatam written in Telugu by Pōthana. He then asked for Bhagavan's opinion about the 'Sākshātkāram' (divine vision) that Gajēndra had. Bhagavan said with a smile, "You see, Gajēndra prayed that he might be saved from death. In the Padyas that you have read out, there is description of God, saying that He is without any of the attributes, such as birth, sin, form, action, destruction and other qualities. It is

also stated that He is omnipresent. That means that he prayed to the Paramātma in all His fullness. When he came to a state where he did not see anyone else except Paramātma, it means that he sees only the Paramātma everywhere. If that is so, who is it that causes pain and who is it that is being pained? When the subject matter is thus so full, what is the meaning of saying that God came out of a fort in a garden in Vaikunta? What else is it except a *bhāvanā* (idea)? You may call it *Sākshātkāram* or whatever you like."

"If that is so, are all *Sākshātkāras* mere ideas?" asked the devotee. "From the view-point of a Dvaita, that is *Sākshātkāram*, but from the view-point of an Advaita, those are only *bhāvanas*," said Bhagavan.

Sometime back, some Andhras who were going on a pilgrimage came here and stayed for some days. Amongst them a lady sang in the hall now and then the songs of Bhadrādri Rāmadās. One day she sang the song beginning with '*Ikshvāku Kulatilaka*'. In that song it is stated that Rāmadās made this jewel and that jewel and it cost this much and that much. After that, she sang the song wherein it is stated that Rāmadās made some ornaments which Sri Rāmachandra wore and went about proudly with them. When Bhagavan heard this, he looked at us and said, "Did Sri Rāmachandra ask for those ornaments? It is all the devotee's own desire. Why then abuse Rāmachandra?"

"If you want to abuse, you should abuse God only, it is said," remarked a devotee.

"That is all right. Appar also prayed to God abusing him in the same manner. He however abused in a

subtle way. Apart from that, it is stated that 'I have made this ornament and that ornament'. Who is he to make that ornament? It means that he is somebody different from God," said Bhagavan.

"So long as there is a God and a devotee, that feeling is natural," said the devotee.

"Yes, that is so as long as we have a *Dvaita Drishti* — a feeling of duality ; but in *Advaita Drishti* — that is, a feeling of oneness — you will not have all this. You are myself and I am yourself. When such a feeling comes, who is the doer ? What is it that is being done ?" said Bhagavan.

"That is called *Parābhakti*, is it not ?" asked that devotee.

"Yes, yes," said Bhagavan nodding his head and kept quiet.

(101) JNĀNA YAGNAM

26th July, 1949

Gurram Subbarāmaiah came here the day before yesterday morning. Whenever he comes, he talks to Bhagavan all the time he is here. This morning also, while speaking to Bhagavan as usual, he said, "As I was coming here, I got down in Madras and went to the house of Nagamma's elder brother, D. S. Sastri. They were having a discourse on the Gita at the time."

Bhagavan said, "Yes. All of them came here before having the discourses. What chapter are they reading now ?"

Subbarāmaiah replied, "They are reading the fourth chapter on Jnāna Yoga. At the time I sat there, it was stated that the Karma that a person does after attaining Jnāna is all *Brahmakarma*. Everything is Yagna. To illustrate that point, the Slokas from the 25th to the 30th of chapter IV of Gita were read and it was explained how the various sacrifices done by Yōgis merge into the Brahman — the word '*Juhvati*' being used to indicate that everything is consumed by the sacrificial fire so as to merge ultimately in the Brahman. The commentator said that '*Shrōtrādeen Indriyānyanye Samyamāgnishu Juhvati*' meant that they are controlling the Indriyas (senses). I was not able to understand it properly. Bhagavan may be pleased to explain it clearly."

Bhagavan, who was till then reclining, sat up and said :

श्रोतादीनीन्द्रियाप्यन्ये संयमामिषु जुहति ।
शब्दादीन्विषयानन्ये इन्द्रियामिषु जुहति ॥

— *Gita*, Chap, IV, Sloka 26

(Others offer as sacrifice their senses of hearing etc. into the fires of self-control. Other Yōgis again offer sound and other objects of perception into the fires of the senses.)

The method of performing these sacrifices was first explained as above. Again,

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे ।
आत्मसंयमयोगामौ जुहति ज्ञानदीपिते ॥

— *Gita*, Chap, IV, Sloka 27

(Others sacrifice all the functions of their senses and the function of the vital airs, into the fire of Yōga, in the shape of self-control, which is kindled by wisdom.)

This means that the actions of the *Indriyas* and of the vital airs are sacrificed in the fire of *Samayama*. Having said this, it has further been stated that vital airs like *Prana*, are sacrificed into *Apana*, *Apana* into *Vyana* and in this way one thing is sacrificed into another. Not only the vital airs and the senses ; childhood is sacrificed into boyhood, boyhood into youth, youth into middle age and middle age into old age. So also the inhaling and exhaling of vital airs. Thus is the one sacrificed into the other ; and this is a continuous process. This happens without one being conscious of it. That which is done consciously is called *Jnāna Yagna* (Wisdom Sacrifice)," said Bhagavan.

Another devotee joining in the conversation asked, "It is said that for doing that *Jnāna Yagna* the life's impurities must be destroyed. How to destroy them ? "

Bhagavan replied, " You want to know how ? "

आत्मानमारणि कृत्वा प्रणवं चोतरारणीं ।

ज्ञाननिर्मथनाभ्यासात्पाशं दहति पंडितः ॥

— *Kaivalya Upanishad.*

It means that the Self is to be made the lower 'Arani' * and 'Pranavam' (Om), the upper Arani and by rubbing them constantly one against the other, thus causing

* *Arani* means a twig of the 'Sami tree' used for kindling the sacred fire by attrition.

by friction the fire of Jnāna between the two, the Brahma Jnāni burns away the bond known as ignorance. If one understands this and puts into practice, life's impurities get destroyed," said Bhagavan.

The devotee said, "But Bhagavan always tells us that Self-enquiry 'Who am I?' is the most important, is it not?"

Bhagavan replied, "It is the same thing. For enquiry there must be somebody. There is the person and there is the Self. They are known as the lower *Arani* and the upper *Arani*. The enquiry itself is the attrition. As one goes on continuously with this attrition the fire called *Vijnāna* gets generated and the bond of ignorance that the Self is different from the object gets burnt out. That means the life's impurities get destroyed. Then the Self remains as the real 'Self'. That is '*Moksha*'. It is this, that is called Jnāna Yagna or some such thing." So saying Bhagavan assumed silence.

(102) PRĀNĀYĀMAM (Control of Breathing)

2nd August, 1949

A devotee told me that he could not hear properly the questions you asked Bhagavan when you came here two days back and the replies Bhagavan gave. He therefore requested me to write out the whole conversation and show it to him. Accordingly I wrote it down. I am now sending it to you along with other letters so that you can see if it is all right.

At 4 P.M. on the 28th of last month you sat near Bhagavan when you had a discussion as follows :

You : "In *Gāyatri* it is stated '*Dhiyo yonah Prachodayāth*'. What is its meaning ? "

Bhagavan : " *Dhi* means Buddhi (intellect) ; *Yah* — that lustre ; *Nah* — our ; *Dhiyah* — the intellect ; *Prachodayāth* — teaches. That is the meaning, is it not ? It is by the Intellect that the *Indriyas* (senses) are induced to all action."

You : " For *Sādhana* (practice) is *Prānāyāma* necessary ? "

Bhagavan : " Yes, yes. Before starting any work you begin with *Prānāyāma*, don't you ? One says, '*Āchamya, Prānāyama*'. That means you begin with *Āchamana*, * then gather the *Prānas* (vital airs), and proceed with *Sankalpa* (i.e. the purpose of the worship) and recite the time, date, place etc. You must first do *Prānāyāma* and then only do the *Gāyatri* Japa. It is the same thing for every Japa. You must first do *Prānāyāma*. But then you should not stop there. If you keep the vital breath under control and then do Japa continuously for a long time, you will realise what Japa really is."

You : " Some say there is not much use in practising *Prānāyāma*."

Bhagavan : " That is so. For immature minds, it is stated that they should control the breath to meditate or to do Japa, but for mature minds, meditation is the

* *Achamana* means taking three sips of water before religious ceremonies from the palm of the hand.

main thing. If one inhales and retains the breath and thereby tries to control the mind, one gets choked and upset on that account."

You : "That means it will be like '*Jaala Pakshivath*' (a bird in a net) ".

Bhagavan : "Yes, that is so. But for an immature person, the mind cannot be controlled unless he practises breath-control. That is why it is said that it (control of breath) should be practised, until you get control of the mind ; but even after that you should not stop it. For mature persons the control of breath comes of its own accord. That is because what mainly is, is the act of breath. It goes on of its own accord. The mind remains concentrated whether you do Japa or meditate. When that happens, the breath becomes controlled automatically. All the Sadhanas are for the concentration of the mind."

You : "When one meditates, the whole body appears over-heated. Why so ? And is it good ? "

Bhagavan : "Yes. Would it not be so ? When the mind gets concentrated, the act of breathing stops involuntarily. When that happens, the body does feel over-heated. What of that ? In due course one gets accustomed to it."

Your wife, who was there at the time, took up the thread of the conversation and asked, "Are Japa and Dhyāna the same thing ? "

Bhagavan said, "Yes. As you go on doing Japa continuously for a long time, you will know what Japa really is. That is called Dhyāna. When Vritti (Move-

ment or action of mind) becomes audible (*sabda*) it is called Japa ; when there is *Vritti* alone, it is called *Dhyāna* and knowing of the Thing is called *Jnāna*."

(103) SIVAM — SUNDARAM

(Bliss and Beauty)

20th September, 1949

The wife of the Zamindār of Peddapāvani, a frequent visitor to the Asramam, came with her children last month. She stayed for a month and went away a couple of days ago. One evening, after Veda pārāyana, she approached Bhagavan and said, "Sometime back, Bhagavan gave me Darshan in my dream and gave me Upadēsa. After that, I realised my Self but it is not steady. What should I do ? "

Bhagavan : (amused) "Where has it gone without being steady ? Who is it that is not steady ? "

Zamindārini : "That (realisation) is not steady."

Bhagavan : "Where has it gone without being steady."

Zamindarini : "That experience which I had does not remain steady because of bodily ailment and family worries."

Bhagavan : "I see. Say so. Those that come, come. Those that go, go. We remain as we are."

Zamindārini : "You must bestow on me the strength to remain as I am."

Bhagavan : " You have realised the Self, have you not ? If that is so, all the others disappear of their own accord."

Zamindārīni : " But they have not disappeared."

Bhagavan (smiling) : " I see. They will disappear. Vāsanas have for a long time built their nests within. If we realise that they are there, they will disappear gradually."

Zamindārīni : " Bhagavan must bestow on me the strength to make them disappear."

Bhagavan : " We will see." So saying Bhagavan was quiet.

The next day about the same time she stood humbly in the presence of Bhagavan and said, " Bhagavan, it is not possible for a married woman to stay on in the presence of the Guru for any length of time, can she ? "

Bhagavan : " The Guru is where one is."

Zamindārīni : (still unconvinced) " Should one look upon the whole world as Brahman or should one look upon one's own Self as the most important ? "

Bhagavan : " We exist. And the world is Brahman itself. What then is there to look upon as Brahman ? "

She was taken aback and stood still. Whereupon Bhagavan looked at her compassionately and explained further : " As you know we undoubtedly exist. The world also exists as Brahman. That being so, what is there that one could see as Brahman ? We should make our vision as the all-pervading Brahman. Ancients say, '*Drishtim Jnānamayīm Kritvā Pasyēth Brahmamayam Jagat*'. The world is as we see it. If we see it as

material, it is material. If we see it as Brahman, it is Brahman. That is why we must change our outlook. Can you see the picture in a film without the screen? If we remain as we are, everything adjusts itself to that attitude."

Overjoyed at this and fully satisfied, she came out and sat on the step on the verandah which is opposite to Bhagavan's couch. Bhagavan was sitting on the couch in his characteristic pose, silent as usual and with a smile on his face. Looking at the radiant face of Bhagavan, she said involuntarily, "Ah! How beautiful Bhagavan is!" A devotee who heard the exclamation approached Bhagavan and said, "She is saying how beautiful Bhagavan is." With a slight nod of his head Bhagavan said, "*Sivam Sundaram*"* See how pregnant with meaning that expression is?

(104) THE MUDALIAR GRANNY

24th September, 1949

The Mudaliar Granny who, like Echamma, was bringing food to Bhagavan daily, gave up her body last night and got merged in the lotus feet of Sri Ramana. She was buried in Gounder's compound this afternoon. Her native place is a village called Thillaryādi near Kāraikal. She belonged to the Thondaimandala Mudaliar caste. Her name was Alankāratthammani. She had a son by name Subbiah Mudaliar and a daughter-in-law Kāmākshi. The three used to spend their time in the service of an

* *Sivam-Sundaram* means that which is beautiful is the form of Atma. *Satyam-Sivam-Sundaram* and *Sat-Chit-Anandam* are the names given to describe Atman or Brahman.

old Sanyāsi. That Sanyasi passed away sometime in 1908 or 1909. During his last days, when all of them implored him to tell them about their future it seems he told them that their future was at Arunāchala.

Subsequently, in 1910, it appears she came here along with her son and daughter-in-law. By then Echamma had been supplying Bhagavan food every day. In the same way Alankāratthammani also began supplying food. In due course, she began giving food now and then to the devotees also. The son and daughter-in-law used to help her in the work. After some time the son renounced everything, took to Sanyāsa at the Tiruppananthāl Mutt and began wandering about as a Tamburān (wandering minstrel). Kāmākshi, the daughter-in-law, concentrated all her attention in the service of Bhagavan with single-minded devotion, without being in the least worried over her husband's desertion. She passed away sometime in 1938-1939.

The Granny had no money and none to help her in the domestic work in the house. Seeing her desolate condition, and taking pity on her, Niranjanāndaswāmi, Kunjuswāmi, Ranganātha Gounder and others advised her saying, "Now you are an old woman. You can no longer worry yourself about this service of offering food to Bhagavan. The Asramam is giving shelter to several people. So you eat here and sit in peace in Bhagavan's presence with closed eyes ; or if you so desire we will send you food to your place. Eat and stay at home." She replied, "Whatever the difficulties, I will not give up this holy task. If I do not have money, I will go to ten houses, feeling my way with my stick, beg for food, offer it to Bhagavan and then only will I eat. I cannot keep quiet." So saying, and with tears

in her eyes, the woman went away. Kunjuswāmi, Gounder and other devotees took pity on her and gave her financial help so as to enable her to continue her offerings to Bhagavan. It was only after that, that Rangaswami Gounder built two houses in the place where Kunjuswāmi is now staying with a stipulation that Kunjuswāmi can occupy them during his life time, and after him these should be given away for the use of Sadhus. He endowed some property also for their maintenance and arranged for this old woman to stay there. In her last days, her son came to her and helped her in her offerings to Bhagavan, even though he had renounced the world by becoming a Sanyāsi and a wandering minstrel. In this manner, the life of a devotee who had worshipped Bhagavan for about forty years without failing even for a single day in her self-imposed duty has come to a close.

Granny took great liberties with Bhagavan. During the early days of my stay here she used to bring food and serve it herself to Bhagavan. She used to place on his leaf a handful of curry and a handful of cooked rice. One day, Bhagavan reprimanded her saying, "If you serve so much, how can I eat it?" With great familiarity, she said, "How much is it, Swāmi? It is only very little." "There are several other things also to eat. Should not my stomach contain them all?" said Bhagavan. "It is all a matter of the mind, Swāmi." So saying, she served him as usual and left. Laughing at it, Bhagavan told people near about him, "Do you see? She is paying me back in my own coin (My Upadēsa)."

For the last two or three years, she had been sending food through somebody, and had given up serving it to Bhagavan personally as her eyesight was failing.

It seems someone told her that Bhagavan's body had become very much emaciated. She was therefore feeling that it was all due to her ceasing to serve food personally and one day she came to see Bhagavan. She approached him, and shading her eyes with her palm, said with great feeling of sorrow, "Oh ! How reduced has the body become ! " "Who told you, Granny ? I am all right. What you have heard is all false," said Bhagavan. The old woman came to the place in the hall where women sit and sat down in the front row. After a while, Bhagavan rose from his seat to go out. When Bhagavan gets up, as you know, all the rest of us also get up. She stood at the doorway leaning against the door. When Bhagavan came near, he said with a laugh, "Granny, have I become reduced ? See how well I am ! It is a pity, you are not able to see." So saying, he went out.

Of late, she has not been able to see at all. Even so, when about four months ago she expressed a wish to see Bhagavan, a devotee led her to Bhagavan's presence. When a person near Bhagavan said, "Granny, you have no eyesight to see Bhagavan. Why have you come ? " She replied, "Though I cannot see Bhagavan's body, my body can be seen by Bhagavan and that is more than enough for me." The agony she experienced when she heard that an operation was performed on Bhagavan's arm for the tumour that had grown on it, is indescribable. When Echamma passed away, Bhagavan remarked that Mudaliar Granny was still alive. She too has now passed away. You see, Bhagavan felt relieved as a great responsibility was off his hands. She is indeed lucky but somehow I could not help grieving over her death.

(105) PILGRIMAGE TO TIRUCHULI

12th November, 1949

When I came back here after a two weeks' stay with you in Madras, I found that the condition of Bhagavan's body had changed a good deal for the worse. Hence, with a view to give him some rest, no one was being allowed to remain in his presence except during the time of the Vēda pārāyana. I could not therefore write to you about the questions of devotees and the replies of Bhagavan as they have become rare. As I was troubled over it, I began going through my old papers when I found the notes I had taken about incidents that happened in Bhagavan's presence and the remarks made by Bhagavan from time to time. The notes were written before I began writing these letters to you. I am therefore copying the notes and sending them on to you.

You have already heard of the installation of the photos of Bhagavan and his parents in Sundaramandiram in Tiruchuli where Bhagavan was born. That was done some time in June or July 1944 when, with the help of devotees, the building was acquired and taken possession of by the Asramam authorities. With a view to repairing the house, the Sarvādhikāri started with some devotees on 17-1-1945 for Tiruchuli. Before he actually left, he invited us all to accompany him, saying that there would be several travel facilities for the occasion. Alamēlu Amma Bhagavan's sister, and some other women and men also went. Though I was unwilling to leave Bhagavan's presence, who is to me the personification of God, I was prevailed upon to go with them. As we were about 20 devotees for this journey, it was interesting in its own way.

To go to Tiruchuli, one has to get down at Madurai and go by bus for about 30 miles via Aruppukkōttai. As the Sarvādhikāri had some work to do at Madurai, we had to halt there for two days. We were put up in the house of Krishnamurthi Iyer. At night, all of us who came with the Sarvādhikāri, offered worship at the Meenakshi Temple and also saw the idols of the 63 saints before whom Bhagavan, in his boyhood, overwhelmed with devotion, used to stand frequently, with eyes full of tears. The next morning, some of us went to the temple of Perumāl (Vishnu) where in the three storeys of the building, Lord Varadarāja reigns in three different poses, and we offered worship. Thereafter we began enquiring about the holy house where Bhagavan attained *Jnāna* (knowledge of the Self). A devotee of Bhagavan and his boyhood friend joined us and took us that evening to the house, No. 11 in Chokkanātha Street on the western side. We entered that old house and went into the upstair room which was by the side of the staircase. "This is the room where Bhagavan realised his Self," said the people there. They also pointed out the place where he sat at 11 o'clock in the morning of the day he left Madurai, where he had to write an imposition from Bain's Grammar given to him as a punishment by the teacher and where Bhagavan got immersed in meditation. My heart was filled with devotion, my eyes with tears and my voice got choked. I was in a state where I could not know whether it was grief or happiness that overcame me. In No. 11 of the *Supplement to the Forty Verses on Reality* Bhagavan had written as under :

"Who is born ? Know that he alone is born who, enquiring 'Whence am I born ?' is born in the

Source of his being. The Supreme Sage is he eternally born, again and again, day after day ”

As Sri Ramana was born in the way described above for the welfare of the world, how holy and blessed that place must be !

It is from this small house that Bhagavan started, renouncing everything, after leaving in the almirah by his side a note which he wrote after a hearty meal and sitting on an easy chair. The provocation was a remark made by his elder brother which was by way of a reprimand saying, “ Why all these things (writing and study) when a person is like this (sits still) ? ” Bhagavan was at the time deeply immersed in meditation. It looked as if Lord Arunāchala did not wish him to remain for more than six weeks in the place where he attained *Jnāna*. Lord Buddha attained *Jnāna* after living in a forest for six years and doing penance day and night. It is that place which is known as Buddha Gaya and is now a place of pilgrimage. In the case of Ramana Bhagavan, however, he attained *Jnāna* without any effort in an ordinary house in a narrow lane in the centre of a city and in a small room surrounded by all his relatives. How strange !

I was grieved to find such a holy place remaining unkown, though it was here that Bhagavan changed from a young boy into an *Atmānanda* Ramana (a Ramana who enjoys the bliss of Self-knowledge) ; the place wherefrom he started with the *Brahmāstram* known as ‘ Who am I ? ’, to go to Arunāchala and vanquish the myth about the greatness of pandits who go on arguing but have no practical experience. However, I felt confident that, with Bhaga-

van's grace, this place also would become a place of pilgrimage like the Sundaramandiram in Tiruchuli. I prostrated with devotion in the room, went on to the terrace at the side and went down the staircase. There I met an old woman. Her name is Subbamma, aged 75. She told us that she was there in the same street when Bhagavan went away on his travels, and told us some stories about his boyhood. We took leave of her in due course and came back to our lodgings.

Next morning we started by bus, passed through Aruppukkottai and, as we were approaching Tiruchuli, we first saw the Gōpuram of the temple of Bhūmināthēswara. After passing by the temple and its compound wall, we reached Sundaramandiram where the bus stopped. We all got down, entered the house where Bhagavan was born and, on seeing the picture of Sri Ramana seated in the Padmāsana pose in between the pictures of his parents, we prostrated before it with emotions of great joy. We and the people that had come to see us, numbering about forty, had our meals in that house. Several others who came later while we were taking rest began saying that the house used to be full like that during the days of Sundaram Iyer.

During the three days that we were there we bathed in the Koundinya river, had the Darshan of Kālēswara, worshipped Bhūminātha with his consort Sahāyavalli went round Pralayarudra, prostrated before Bhairavi and saw all those places where Bhagavan had spent his boyhood days. Subsequently among those who came from Tiruvannāmalai, some went to Rāmēswaram on pilgrimage; the Sarvādhikāri with his associates stayed back on account of some work; and I alone neither stayed there nor went to Rāmēswaram but came to

Madurai by the night of the 22nd, started again the next day and so reached the lotus feet of Bhagavan. Even before I came, people here came to know about the house in the Chokkanātha street through a letter written by Krishnamurthi Iyer. All the devotees enquired about it and were pleased on hearing the details from me. It is only after that, that the Asramam purchased the house with the financial help of the Wanaparti Raja. The joy I felt when I related the details of my journey was beyond description, even much greater than what I felt when I actually saw them. What is more, Bhagavan, while enquiring whether I had seen this and that place, told me a number of events about his boyhood. I noted down some of them as they were not in the biography. I shall write to you about them in another letter.

(106) BOYHOOD DAYS AT MADURAI

15th January, 1950

I have already written to you about my going to Tiruchuli (in 1945) when the Sarvādhikāri started for that place to do repairs to the birth place of Bhagavan and how, on that occasion, several devotees, including a number of ladies, accompanied him and how, after my return, Bhagavan told me several incidents of his boyhood. At that time we had also seen the house in Madurai where Bhagavan had Self-realisation. When I told Bhagavan that an old lady by name Subbamma related some more incidents about his life there, he pressed me to tell him all about it.

I said, "She told me that she was living in the same street when Bhagavan ran away from his house in Madurai; that Bhagavan showed even then, by his conduct, glimpses of his feelings of equality with all human beings and that there were several incidents at the time to indicate it."

"What are they?" asked Bhagavan.

I said, "It seems that there was not sufficient supply of water in the house in which Bhagavan lived and so water had to be brought from the opposite house; that sometimes Bhagavan used to help his aunt by bringing water and by doing several odds and ends of the household work."

Bhagavan said, "Yes. Auntie could not lift any big vessel. The water she brought in a small vessel was at times found insufficient for the household. So I used to fetch water in a big vessel. So what?"

I said, "It seems that your mother felt a little annoyed when she heard of this and is reported to have remarked that her son was being made to carry heavy things. When she came to Madurai once, she too had to fetch water. She could not lift the big vessel and requested Bhagavan to fetch water in the big vessel. While bringing it, Bhagavan is said to have remarked, 'You found fault with auntie. What have you done now?' Is that all true?"

Laughing, Bhagavan said, "Yes, yes. But what of it? There are municipal taps now. But in those days there was a lot of difficulty about water. The Vaigai river is at a long distance from Chokkanātha Street. It used to be very near to the house where we first stayed.

When we were there, we used to bathe in the Vaigai river every day. As summer advanced, the water in the river would dry up. We then used to go there in the evenings and excavate enough sand in the river-bed so that a big vessel could be dipped into it. Subsequently we played about in the sands. By the time we finished our games, the sand ditch would be filled with water. We would bathe in that water and return home. The ditches that we excavated every day were very useful for other people also."

I said, "It seems even the playthings of Mahātmās serve as useful things for others."

Bhagavan said, "That's all right. But tell me, you have gone to the temple of Varadarāja Perumal, haven't you? You must have noticed that there are three parapet walls for each of the three storeys. Very often, all of us boys used to go to the third storey and play hide-and-seek and other games. A big tank could be seen from the window of the third storey. We used to go to that tank off and on and have competitions in swimming. I invariably used to win in the competitions. That tank is on the way leading to Tirupparankundram."

I said, "I read in '*Ramana Leela*' about a feast that Bhagavan had with other boys in Tirupparankundram. It was however not possible for us to go there."

Bhagavan said, "That is on the way to Tiruchuli. Only you have to take a little diversion. There are similar places around Madurai like Pasumalai, Nāgamalai, Enugamalai and several others. We used to go

there sometimes. Their greatness could be found in '*Halāsyamāhātmyam*'."

I asked, "Is it a fact that you were going to Alagar Koil also?"

Bhagavan replied, "Yes, yes. That is about 12 miles from Madurai. The temple is a very big one. There, everyday *Sarkarai Pongal* is offered twice to the Lord. It was excellent. Once when I went there I was given a little of it along with others. I wished I could have more of it. I felt, however, shy to ask for more. So I kept quiet. You know what happened when I went there another time? The children of one of the Archakas were going home for the holidays. I accompanied them and stayed with them for a whole day. On that day, it was their turn for Archana. Their house was about 2 furlongs from the temple. After the night Puja was over they got a big plateful of pongal as their share. On seeing me, they felt that I was a sturdy fellow and could easily carry it and so they put the plate on my head and went ahead chit-chatting amongst themselves. You know how heavy it was! All the muscles of my neck began to ache. It was night time. It was also dark. The plate must not fall down because it contained God's *Prasādam*. What could I do? I felt that it was a punishment for my wanting to have some more pongal when last I came, and so I somehow carried it until I reached the house."

I said, "Did not any one of them offer to carry it for a little distance?"

Bhagavan replied, "No. They were walking and were completely absorbed in their discussions about some of their own affairs. How would they think about me?"

I said, "Perhaps Bhagavan did not say that it was heavy and he could not carry it ? "

Bhagavan remarked, "How could I do that ? It was pre-ordained that I should carry it and so I carried it. Subsequently, they gave me a big lump of the pongal on a leaf. When I ate some of it, I got a feeling of aversion to it. It was however *Prasādam*, and as it could not be thrown away, I somehow managed to eat it. None of the others touched it even. They gave it away to the servant next morning. It is the same with everything. If there is ample supply, no one wants it."

I remarked, "So Bhagavan carried the plate with the same feelings as Jada Bharata * did when he carried the palanquin."

Bhagavan said, "What of that ? They merely felt that I was robust and could easily carry it. What else did they know ? " So saying, he changed the topic and began telling us about wrestling bouts, playing with balls and other boyhood games. All those things have been mentioned in '*Ramana Leela*'.

* Jada Bharata was a *Jivanmukta* and an *Avadhuta* like Bhagavan.

BRAHMANIRVANA

The small tumour which showed itself on the left upper arm of Bhagavan in November 1948, began growing from day to day so that by 1-2-1949 it became as big as a marble. The doctor in charge of the Asramam hospital Dr. Sankara Rao, and a retired surgeon Dr. Srinivasa Rao pointed it out to Bhagavan and offered to remove it by a small surgical operation. Bhagavan however did not agree to it. As it continued to grow rapidly, the doctors got perturbed and somehow prevailed upon Bhagavan to agree to its removal. Accordingly the first operation was performed on the morning of 9-2-1949.

All the devotees wanted the bandage to be covered so as not to be visible to outsiders. But then, was there an upper cloth to cover it ? Was there a shirt to wear ? The only thing Bhagavan had was a white cloth half-a-yard wide and three-fourths of a yard long. He tied it around his neck so as to conceal the bandage. Still the bandage could be seen through the gaps by some one or other of the visitors. When some people who had the courage to ask him, enquired what was the matter, Bhagavan used to reply with a laugh, that he had worn a bracelet on the arm or that a Lingam had been born there, or that it was a *Swayambhu Lingam*.^{*} Some time later the bandage was removed. People said that the wound was healing up. Somehow, everyone forgot about it during the bustle of the Kumbhābhishēkam which took place on 17-3-1949. As soon as the festivities were over all people came to know that the

* *Swayambhu Lingam* is a lingam which springs or arises from the ground by itself. It is associated with Lord Siva...

tumour had shown itself again. Some suggested treatment with green leaves and milk of the fig tree. Others brought a medicated plaster and put it on. On 27-3-1949, Rāghavāchari and other doctors who came from Madras, said that none of those remedies would do and that the tumour must be operated upon again. They left after deciding that a second operation should be performed and promised to come back on 3-4-1949 for the purpose.

I was somehow frightened and in a prayerful attitude, entreated Bhagavan, saying, "Why all these operations ? Why do you not cure yourself by getting some medicine prescribed by yourself and using it, the same as you did when you had jaundice ? "

Bhagavan replied, "They are all reputed doctors. Let their treatment be carried out."

When I said that they had already performed an operation which had been found unsuccessful and enquired why Bhagavan should not have his own treatment, Bhagavan said, "Let it go this time. If it appears again, we will see about it."

On the morning of 3-4-1949, while we were discussing about the details of the operation in the presence of Bhagavan, the doctors came. Seeing them, Bhagavan said, "Look. The doctors have come," and began arranging his legs preparatory to getting up. Bhagavan was showing in practice in this matter also his 'Upadēsa' (teaching) : Whatever is to happen will happen and whatever is not to happen will not happen. Bhagavan said with a firm voice, "Yes. That which is to happen will not stop even if we say 'no'." So saying he got down from the couch and went into the hospital. Till about the middle of May 1949, everything

went on fairly satisfactorily. But afterwards there was an all round anxiety and worry because when the stitches were removed blood began oozing from the place where the operation had been performed. The tumour had not healed and was clearly exhibiting its malignancy.

As it was suggested that it would do good to expose the tumour to the sun's rays, in June 1949, the doctors used to seat Bhagavan behind the 'Gōsāla' (cow-shed), open the bandage, wash the wound and keep it exposed for some time to the sun's rays. On such occasions, devotees who expressed their fear and anxiety were told by Bhagavan, "See how nice it is! It is like a precious ruby. It has become an ornament to my arm. See how red it is! It is glowing brilliantly with the sun's rays falling on it. Look at it!" And when they saw blood oozing out and remarked about it with great grief, he used to say, "Why worry? Let the blood flow out. It is a ruby, you see. Like the 'Syāmanthaka-mani' * this is also producing gold every day. The only difference is, in that case, the gold that was produced was yellow while in this case it is red. See how much is oozing out." And if any devotees prayed to him to heal himself, he used to say "What have I to do with this?" or "What can I do?"

On 5-7-1949, an old man from Valuvai, a village nearby and a reputed Ayurvedic doctor, started applying the juice of some green leaves and bandage the wound. Before he began the treatment, he saw the wound in all its malignancy and remarked with immense grief, "Oh Bhagavan! How serious this is! Swāmi, this is can-

* Syamanthakamani is a kind of valuable gem, said to yield daily eight loads of gold and also protect the wearer from all kinds of dangers and calamities.

cer. This should not be touched at all. Why did you allow it to be operated on ? If I had known it in the beginning, I would have dressed it with green leaves containing medical properties and cured it. It is too late now, Swāmi."

When Bhagavan was returning to the hall after leaving the hospital in the evening of 1-7-1949, his body began to shake and his legs began to falter. He had fever. He somehow reached the hall and squatted on the couch. While we were all alarmed and were anxiously looking at him, Sānthamma could not contain herself and, being elderly, and a very old devotee, took the liberty of addressing Bhagavan and said, "Oh, the body!" No sooner had she said this than Bhagavan remarked, "Oh, the body ? Why ? What has happened ? It is shaking. What if it shakes ?" So saying, he suppressed the shivering, and looking at his attendants, said with a laugh, "That is Natarāja's* dance. Why should you be afraid ? If everyday the body is giving you Darshan in its static form, today it is giving it to you in dance pose. Why all this anxiety ?" So saying, he sat there in dignified silence. The *Vēdapārāyana* was then done.

On 7-8-1949 Dr. Guruswāmi Mudaliār was here personally to supervise the third operation. I had already written to you that it was from that date that questions and answers in Bhagavan's presence had become rare. After the final operation was performed on 19-12-1949, Bhagavan did not come into either the new hall or the old hall. He confined himself to the small room opposite the big hall. After homeopathic

* Nataraja is another name for Lord Siva, one of the Trinity. He is reputed to dance when in ecstasy.

treatment was tried Āyurvēdic treatment began. The Moos (a famous Āyurvēdic doctor from Kerala) who was treating Bhagavan felt discouraged and on 3-3-1950 he wrote a Stōthram in praise of Bhagavan and arranged for its Pārāyana along with *Vishnu Sahasranāmam* (thousand names of Vishnu), every day. Some devotees performed *Sūrya namaskār* (salutation to the Sun) and some began doing *Mrityunjaya Japam* (prayer to Lord Siva, the conqueror of death). Just as he had handed over his body to the doctors to do whatever they liked with it, saying ‘Yes, yes’ he was accepting the offerings of those devotees in the shape of *Tirtha* (consecrated water) and *Prasadams* (offerings of food to the gods).

After the *Mrityunjaya Japam* was over, the people concerned asked him if they could proceed with the *Mrityunjaya Homam*. He nodded in assent and as soon as they left turned towards Venkataratnam and said, “Extinction of ego and abidance in Self is the *Mrityunjaya Homam*. In *Devikalottaram*, v. 16 and 17, it is stated that one should not get immersed in mantrams, homams and such things. Also in *Sarvajnanottaram*, v. 35, it is said that abidance in Self itself is the mantra, the devata, the diksha, the tapas, the homam and the dhyana.”

About the same time a lady devotee had ‘*Chandi Hōmam*’ performed. Another lady lighted holy candles to appease Šani (Saturn). Some had *Abhishēka* and other *Pujas* performed in Arunāchalēwara temple.

On 17-3-1950 Bhagavan had some vomittings with consequent discomfort and so did not take any food subsequently. Hearing that, his sister Alamelu went to him and said, “Oh, Bhagavan ! It seems you have not

taken anything at all. Today's *pāyasa* (pudding) is very tasteful. You have not taken even a drop of it." Bhagavan however sent her away with some words of comfort.

From the time the cancer showed itself, I always used to pray to Bhagavan whenever I could manage to see him, "Please get yourself cured of this ailment and remain in this world for our sake." Bhagavan used to console me with some comforting words or other. When the third and the fourth operations were performed and I expressed my fear and anxiety, he used to say that there was no need for worry and there was nothing really seriously wrong. Hence, however serious the ailment was, and however much other people felt anxious and discouraged, I used to think that Bhagavan would hint to me if there was anything imminent. That egoism enveloped my whole being and blinded me to the grim realities of the situation. I was therefore confident that he would get cured ultimately.

On 19-3-1950 was the Lunar New Year's Day. From the time I had come here, it had been usual for me to offer to Bhagavan for his personal wear a khaddar towel and a *kowpeenam* and arrange for Bhiksha in the Asramam that day. As I did not like to give it up this year, I took with me a towel and *Kowpeenam* in the evening at about 7 o'clock of 18-3-1950, went into that small room accompanied by our post-master, Raja Iyer. Bhagavan stared at me. I quietly placed the clothes on the table and said the next day was the *Ugadi* (New Year's Day). Bhagavan started at that and said, "Is the *Ugādi* come? Is the *Vikruti* (the name of the new year) come?" There was something strange and perplexing in that voice. And I cannot explain why,

but it seemed to forebode something disastrous and it was to me heart-rending. The two attendants stood aghast. I too could say nothing and so mumbled, "I felt it would be inauspicious if I gave up my usual practice." Bhagavan said, "Oh ! What is there in that ?" and looking at one of the attendants by name Ānjaneyulu who was by his side, he said, "Keep those clothes carefully. Nāgamma has brought them. Tomorrow it is Ugādi, it seems." So saying, in a very gentle manner he gave us leave to go. As the attendants were removing the clothes, I went near the couch and asked Bhagavan, "How is the arm ?" Bhagavan said, "What shall I say how it is ?" I told Bhagavan, "You must somehow cure yourself." Bhagavan replied, "Ahem. I cannot say anything now." I pleaded with great humility, "How could you say that, Bhagavan ?" Perhaps he felt that my hopes would not go unless he told me the bare truth and so looking at me with compassion, he said, "Ahem. Cure ? What cure ?" I said, "Ayyo ! Will it not be cured ?" Bhagavan replied, "Ahem. Cure ? What cure ? How could there be any cure now ?" The previous assurance that there was nothing to worry about and nothing would happen — all of them disappeared at that moment and when I heard those words, my whole body shook with fear. My eyes filled with tears and my voice got choked. I wanted to ask about our fate for the future and so was trying to gather some composure of mind and open my lips when someone from the office came in hurriedly on some urgent work. I was startled by that noise and came out without asking what I wanted to ask and slowly retraced my steps to my hut. The next morning I thought of approaching Bhagavan again and ask for his final message, but could not get an opportunity. The resonant voice of Bhaga-

van that said, "Is the *Ugādi* come?" appeared to me to say, "All is over." With that *Ugādi* the great privilege I had all these years of hearing and enjoying the nectar of Bhagavan's voice had ended.

On the evening of 14-4-1950, I went at 6-30 o'clock and stood in the queue arranged for an orderly Darshan of Bhagavan and when I got up on the raised mound opposite the door of the room where Bhagavan was sitting, and stood there for a while with my sight concentrated on him and prayed to him mentally, "Oh Prabho! Won't you for once radiate on me your compassionate look?" Bhagavan's eyes slowly began to open and from those eyes, a mild and compassionate look came on me. That was the last time I had the great fortune of his compassionate look.

At 8-47 that night, Sri Ramana, the embodiment of light and enlightenment, left his mortal coil.

When the mortal body of Gurudev, who was at once my mother, father, Guru and God and who has protected me all these years, ceased to be the abode of that great soul, I remained still as a statue, drowned in inexpressible grief and sorrow.

The writing of these letters was begun on 21-11-1945 and continued uninterrupted all these days through the grace of Bhagavan, and with the end of the Avatār of Bhagavan, I am giving up the writing of these letters.

OM TAT SAT
